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They are, of course, in no way responsible for any of the views expressed.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THIS TIME OF CONFUSION

THE age in which we live—it is commonly agreed—is an age of confusion. In religion, philosophy, politics, morals, it is a time of doubt. New science has undermined all the old orthodoxies. With numbers of people the traditional religions do not grip. There is a divorce between religion and daily life. Philosophy also gives no clear message. The ordinary man passes philosophy by; hears it only as a distant murmur of confused and unintelligible voices. In politics, even the root ideas of liberty and justice are rejected by dominant parties in powerful States. Almost everywhere a wide-spread poverty continues, generation after generation, in the presence of abundance and luxury, it breeds a bitter discontent that threatens the very structure of society. And there broods over the world of to-day a chronic sense of insecurity because of the danger of general war. On every hand we see uncertainty, questioning, anxiety.

The seething unrest of our time has spread over the world. Look East, look West; in Japan, China, India, Turkey, in Russia, in the countries of Central or Western Europe, or in America, among Buddhists or Confucians, Hindus or Moslems, Jews or Christians—everywhere there is lacking a feeling of stability. There is no general confidence in the ideas inherited from the past, or in the existing order of things founded upon them. Nor is there any clear vision anywhere of new ideas for the founding of a new order.

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Many individuals, no doubt, in every country and in every community, remain untouched. Many preserve a religious faith serene and unshaken, and are guided through life by a definite code of conduct based upon it. Many others are content with a secular philosophy of life, of their own making or learnt from accepted teachers, they feel that they know where they stand, if not in relation to the universe, at least in relation to human society. But this, clearly, is not enough. It is vital that there should be some standards, at least, which are generally agreed. Our civilization cannot go on indefinitely with the fear in its heart that its ethics and its politics, the training of the next generation, the relationships of individuals, classes, nations, races—that all this rests upon nothing solid, that the entire structure, vast and elaborate, is built upon foundations that are shallow and weak, that seem to be already quaking. The whole company of thinking men throughout the world, brought into closer touch now than ever before, are aware of the facts; they see the danger

These being the conditions in which we live, what courses are open to us?

Shall we try to return to the old orthodoxies and conventions; call our wishes beliefs; be content with “a faith in someone else’s faith”?<sup>1</sup>

Shall we say It is liberty of thought and action which has brought these confusions, let us abandon liberty; let us follow whoever has the courage to seize power and the cunning to control ideas, let us accept intellectual tyranny for fear of moral anarchy?

<sup>1</sup> The sources of quotations and references to authorities will be found in the Table at the end of the volume

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Or shall we withdraw into a fatalistic indifference ? Shall we say, with Gibbon, that history is " little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind " ? Why should things be otherwise now ? " Agreement among religions or among philosophers " ? When has there ever been agreement among either ? Is there any possibility of finding even the basis for the beginnings of an agreement ? After all, what is human reason ? What is Truth ? And what is Right and Wrong ? Meantime let us " look upon the wine when it is red " ; or take refuge, perhaps, in art or else in amusement Let us leave mankind to its crimes, its follies and its misfortunes, enduring as best we may the evils that come to our share.

Shall we be content then to see the world divide itself once more into Cynics and Epicureans and Stoics ? Disaster, sooner or later, assuredly lies that way, as the Greeks and the Romans discovered.

And the great problems are insistent We have felt too deeply the beauty and majesty of the universe ; we have listened too long to

all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking ;

we have experienced too often

the burthen of the mystery,  
the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,

to be content to fall back into mere indifference

There is another course open, the course taken more than once in former ages when societies have been

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redeemed from phases of confusion and peril. It is for men everywhere to give the best of their minds to solving the problems of the times; and to view them as a whole; not to fear examining and testing the very foundations on which civilization rests; to reshape, if need be, even its basic ideas

Perhaps we may already be at the threshold of a different time. That far-sighted observer, eminent among our present-day philosophers, Professor Whitehead, has ventured the prophecy that "we are entering upon an age of reconstruction, in religion, in science, and in political thought." And he adds, "such ages, if they are to avoid mere ignorant oscillation between extremes, must seek truth in its ultimate depths."

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE WORLD AROUND US

**THE** world around us may be seen under various aspects. **Three** are familiar. They are the aspect of ordinary life; the aspect revealed by physical science; and the vital, or mental, or psychical aspect—call it what you will.

In ordinary life we know of material objects. They are solid; they have substance, size and weight. They have colour, odour, heat. The rose is red, and it smells sweetly; the grass is green; a fire is hot, and ice is cold. There are sounds, and we hear them. We see the sun rise and set, and at night some thousands of little stars twinkle in the sky. There are wind and weather, and “the wind bloweth where it listeth”. Men act as they choose, according to their own free will. They are subject also to chances; one wins a prize in a lottery and one is killed in a railway accident, it is pure hazard which is which. In this world time is one thing and space is another; the clock and the calendar tell us about time; the measure and the map tell us about space; and the two are quite distinct. This is the world as perceived for hundreds of thousands of years by primitive man, as perceived now by the child, and probably also, in its main features, by animals.

Physical science reveals a very different world. Books, articles and lectures by scientists have made us well acquainted with it. It is the world of chemical molecules and atoms; of protons, electrons, positrons and neutrons; and of quanta. It is the world of electro-

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magnetic rays—the gamma rays, the X-rays, the ultra-violet rays, the rays of visible light, the infra-red rays, and the Hertzian rays used in broadcasting; the whole forming a continuous series, differentiated by their wave-lengths.

When we would form some idea of dimensions in this underlying world, we are told that if a drop of water were enlarged to the size of the earth, the atoms of oxygen and of hydrogen that compose the drop, enlarged to scale, would be about as big as toy balloons; if one of those hydrogen atoms were again enlarged to the size of the earth, its nucleus would still be no more than two inches across (Yet the weight of an atom can now be stated to within its ten-thousandth part.) Physicists tell us that they do not yet know how an electron moves within the atom, but that they do know that its motion, whatever it is, has frequencies of the order of thousands of millions of millions in a second.

In that world it would be meaningless to say “the rose is red” The right statement would be—the atoms forming part of the surface molecules of the rose are of a kind which absorb the greater part of any ray of white light that falls upon them, and reflect that part of the ray which has a wave-length of about one-eighty-thousandth of a millimetre.<sup>1</sup> If a human eye happens to pass across a beam of reflected rays of that wave-length, some of them are conveyed through the retina, and affect part of a system of about half-a-million “rods and cones” behind the eye, and ultimately a portion of the brain, causing there a sensation which we name in language by the word “redness”.

<sup>1</sup> Such is the description that would be given by wave-mechanics; quantum mechanics would express it differently

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The rose does not "smell sweetly". What it does is to emit continuously a cloud of minute material particles. They are such, and our bodies are such, that, if a number of the particles enter the nose of a human being, they cause, by way of the olfactory nerves, a sensation in the brain for which we have no other name than "the sweet smell of a rose".

There is no such thing as "sound". Waves in the air may be started by something vibrating, such as the vocal cords in a larynx or the brass of a trumpet. If an ear is within range, the air-waves cause corresponding vibrations in its drum, with specific effects, through the aural apparatus, upon the brain.

Heat is not a quality of fire. The quality of fire is radiation of particular wave-lengths. When our bodies meet that radiation they experience a feeling which we call heat. Or contact with an accelerated movement of molecules, in a gas, a liquid or a solid, may give rise to the same sensation of heat.

That the sun does not rise and set, but that we are on a globe revolving on its own axis and circling round the sun, has been known for some centuries. And we have long been aware that the stars are not small, and are not to be numbered merely in thousands. The number of separate stars, which our most powerful telescopes are now able to show us, is of the order of a thousand millions, each one comparable in size with our sun. All these are part of our own galaxy, the Milky Way, while there are many millions of such galaxies. The light from the nearest of these, travelling at its speed of over ten million miles a minute, has taken about a million years on its journey; from the farthest that are visible, about two hundred and fifty million years.



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In the universe presented by physical science there is no possibility of ultimately separating space and time; there is only a single Space-time. And there is no such thing as chance. Every event is the consequence of previous events; everything that happens is the effect of a combination of a multitude of prior causes; and like causes always produce like effects. The Laws of Causality and of the Uniformity of Nature prevail everywhere and always.

Such, then, is a second aspect of the universe. It is a materialist aspect. There was a time when many scientists were content to rest there. They anticipated that further research would bring into the same frame all the phenomena that still remained outside, chief among them the phenomena of Life and Mind. Those hopes have so far been disappointed. Those views are seldom heard to-day. Biology has become less and less materialist. Professor Wildon Carr, writing from the standpoint of philosophy, said: "A material thing, say a billiard-ball, is what it is in such a place at such a moment; it is altogether present whenever and wherever it is. A living thing, a germ, or a seed, an animal or a person, is never all that it is in any place at any moment. Its reality is not its actuality, but its potentiality<sup>1</sup>. At every moment it is more than it actually is at that moment. An acorn is the potentiality of an oak-tree, even though it may be crushed under foot and never develop its nature. The most exhaustive description of the constituent molecules, atoms, electrons, and the completest history of their assemblage, will not express the reality of the acorn. The chemist in his laboratory might conceivably assemble and fit into their exact

<sup>1</sup> We might rather say that both are elements in its reality.

**order** all the actual constituents of the acorn, but to **synthesize** a real acorn he would need to create its past and endow that past with a directing power to determine its future. This is the great distinction between the living and the non-living; there is no more in the non-living than its actuality; in the living there is more than its actuality; its reality is its potentiality."

A magnet is held over a needle and the needle jumps to the magnet; that is a purely mechanical phenomenon. But watch a chess-player cogitating for half-an-hour whether he shall move a pawn one square forward or the Queen two squares back, and finally deciding for the one or for the other; can that process, by any refinement or elaboration, be held analogous to the jump of the needle? Or imagine a dramatist sitting down to write his next scene, or a mathematician thinking out the solution of a problem, or a violinist playing an air from memory—there is something essentially different there from anything which physical science can describe.

You cannot explain a piece of cloth merely by analysing the wool-fibres into their cells, the cells into their molecules, and so to the atoms and to the protons and electrons. Some essential things would be left out. You would be forgetting the mental qualities in the sheep, which allowed them to feed and to breed, their vital qualities which caused the wool to grow; the intelligence, also, of human beings which enabled them to domesticate sheep, to shear the wool, to make machinery and to manufacture the cloth. Omit these, and there would remain the electrons and the atoms, but not the cloth. Essential to its existence are Life and Mind.

Consider the strange phenomena of growth. We are so accustomed to seeing grass grow, leaves and flowers

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unfold, chickens being hatched out of eggs, that we seldom stay to think how these things come about. Biology tells us that living growth is usually accomplished by the division of cells; it differs from the inorganic formation of crystals in being from the inside outwards, and in using material which is in most cases quite different from that composing the organism. Embryology tells us of the single fertilized germ-cell as it divides, proliferates, differentiates. In an animal embryo some groups of cells become muscle, some nerve tissue, some bone, skin, heart, lungs—each in right proportion and in the right place. Science describes this process as observed fact. But chemical molecules cannot so arrange themselves, under the influence only of mechanical attractions. We are bound to ask—What is it that is happening in each cell to lead it to develop just in that way? Clearly there must be something tremendous happening there.

Samuel Butler, in his *Life and Habit*, contended that a mental process of some kind is at work, some kind of choice: that there is an element of memory, inherited from all past ancestors and crystallized into habit, which determines the action of the germinating cells. Sir Arthur Thomson held much the same view. He wrote: "There must be, one cannot help thinking, some evolutionary urge or *nisus*, *élan*, or impulse, rather subtler than has been yet analysed into either mechanical or chemical or biological terms. I mean nothing mystical, but something more than tendencies to aggregate, to colloidify, to incorporate, to grow, to multiply, and so on, with all the involved catalysts, hormones and organizers—I mean a psychical urge, the subjective side of endeavour." Again he wrote else-

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where, " It is difficult to think of a germ-cell, of a higher animal at least, as being without its psychical aspect. Unless we think of ' the mind ' as entering in at a later stage in development, the germ-cell must have a dim primordium of the subjective, the promise and potency of mentality."

So the world about us may be seen under a third aspect, the psychical aspect.

All three relate, of course, to the same world. When we speak of the everyday world of common sense being a different world from that of physical science or from the world of mind, we are obviously using a mere figure of speech. There is only one world that we apprehend.

We may make mistakes as to its nature, and often do. Common sense had to admit that the movement round the earth which it attributed to the sun was illusion. Some of the scientific theories of yesterday have been abandoned to-day, and some of those of to-day will doubtless be superseded to-morrow. Sometimes there are incompatibilities which have to be studied and resolved. So far as our perceptions are right, the aspects coincide. Where they do not, our perceptions must be wrong.

But, it may be said, there are plain contradictions. How can we accept, for example, both the " solidity " of material objects as held by common sense and also their diaphanous character as revealed by modern physics? If this wall consists " in reality " of whirling or pulsing electrical charges, through which the rays from a broadcasting station can pass as easily as if it were not there, its " solidity " must surely be " mere appearance "

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That conclusion need not follow. The wall may be both solid for us and not solid for the rays. I cannot walk through the wall because the electrons <sup>1</sup> that compose it are so ordered as to resist the system of electrons which is my body; but their order is also such as not to resist the passage of the wireless rays. Light-rays easily pass through a glass window; but that fact does not make its solidity an illusion for the bee buzzing on the window-pane trying to get out, or for the rain that beats upon it outside.

When the invention of the glass lens and the prism, and their use in telescope, microscope and spectroscope, enabled science to disclose another aspect of things than the customary one, it was generally assumed that this must be the real world, and that the other was appearance. But why should that which is newly-discovered be more real than that which is familiar? Why should the atom be more real than the solid object, or the electron than the atom? The protoplasmic cells of which a man is made up are not more real than the man; or the chemical molecules in a cell more real than the cell itself

So also it is often held that if mind be accepted as fact, matter cannot be so accepted. It is difficult to find a reason for such a view. In the mind of the chess-player there is some process going on which is not material, in the chess-board and the chess-men there is not; both these statements may be true, and they are not incompatible. Thought may be as real as matter and

<sup>1</sup> Using the word "electron" in the sense that has become customary, as including all the various forms of electrical units, positive, negative and neutral, which are believed to exist within the atom.

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**matter as thought.** The ideas in the mind of the architect, from which the design of the house has sprung, may be not less real, nor more real, than the house itself.

This is substantially the doctrine of Spinoza. Summed up by Sir Frederick Pollock, in his *Life and Philosophy of Spinoza*, it is expressed as follows:

“There is not a world of thought opposed to or interfering with a world of things: we have everywhere the same reality under different aspects. Nature is one as well as uniform.”

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

WE seek the causes of the moral unrest and the tendencies to pessimism prevalent in our times. The discoveries of astronomy are among them

When the average man, going about his daily life in this familiar world, is confronted with the vastness of the cosmos as it is now revealed, he stands appalled. He has an almost physical sensation of vertigo. It is as though a chasm had suddenly opened at his feet, an abyss bottomless and boundless. In presence of the cold immensities of illimitable space, he feels himself puny and lost

“Man must reconcile himself to the humble position of the inhabitant of a speck of dust, and adjust his views on the meaning of human life accordingly”. Sir James Jeans says that, and his view is commonly accepted. We learn that even the continuance of any form of life upon this globe is precarious. A time will inevitably come when the diffusion of the sun’s heat will have made the earth too cold to be habitable. Its ultimate fate will be that of the lifeless moon—

A ruined world, a globe burnt out,  
A corpse upon the road of night.

The moon, indeed, now rides with us in the sky, like the slave in the chariot of a Roman general at his triumph, to remind the earth that, with all its achievements and its glories, it yet is mortal. With that as the end of

man's journey, how can we agree that this is, as General Smuts describes it, "a friendly universe"?

The very universe itself, we are told, subject to a law of diffusion of energy, continuous and irreversible, must ultimately cease to be. There is another saying of loans—Mr Bertrand Russell quotes it and concurs—"with universes as with mortals, the only possible life is progress to the grave" From such "depressing conclusions" Russell sees no escape Many other thinkers take the same view. These ideas have gradually permeated the public mind. Modern astronomy, so interpreted, contributes in some degree to the intellectual pessimism which shadows our age.

Yet there may be other interpretations and other conclusions.

Our physicists, who write grimly of "the dying sun", tell us also that the time which will elapse before the diffusion of solar heat will make human life impossible on this planet will be of the order of a million million years. For every one year that has passed from the Stone Age until now, at least one hundred million years remain for mankind before the end Sir James Jeans himself gives one of his vivid illustrations to help us to realize the immensity of that stretch of time Imagine that Cleopatra's Needle (the obelisk on the Thames Embankment, sixty-eight feet high) represents the period of the geological history of the earth till now Then the period of the existence of the human race would be represented in proportion by the thickness of a penny laid on the top of the column; and five thousand years of civilization by the thickness of a postage stamp placed on the penny Jeans then calculates that postage stamps, each representing five thou-



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sand years, can go on being added one on another until they reach the height of Mont Blanc before the cooling of the sun is likely to have any appreciable effect upon human life. It is obvious that the two matters—our actual life and the cooling of the sun—are so completely out of scale with one another that they have no effective relationship. The whole discussion may be put aside as irrelevant.

Further, there can be no certainty that later discoveries will not reveal some cosmic process, as yet unknown and even unimaginable, which is perennially at work, replacing the energy diffused through radiation. Such a process is not more unimaginable than is an original process of creation. If it in fact exists, this concern for the fate of our descendants, many thousands of millions of generations from now, would prove to have been as gratuitous as it is certainly premature.

The vastness of the universe is also, if we come to reflect, of no special significance. There is no more reason for man to feel "humble" because the world of stars and galaxies is so much bigger than he is, than for him to feel exalted because he himself is so much bigger than the world of atoms and electrons. These are matters merely of size, and size in itself is unimportant.

Our standards of measurement are arbitrary, and relative to ourselves. We are five or six feet high, so we consider a thousand miles a long distance, a thousandth of an inch a short distance. We live about sixty or seventy years, so we regard a thousand years as a long time and a second as a short time. But nature knows nothing of our standards of large and small, long and short. She can work as easily on the scale of the stars, or on the scale of the electrons, or on the scale of

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our terrestrial life which lies about midway between. And there is no "superiority" or "inferiority" in one or the other. It is a kind of cosmic snobbery to expect us to feel "humble" in the presence of astronomical dimensions merely because they are big; like the vulgarity of the guide who asks us to admire a marble table because it is the largest in the world, or a picture because it cost an impressive sum.

But what is significant is Mind. Not humility because our planet is but a speck of dust, and our bodies infinitesimal in relation to the cosmic vastness, but rather a pride and an exaltation that our minds transcend it—this may justly be our demeanour. "More wonderful than the heavens seen through a telescope is the eye and brain that sees them"

But what to me is Alpha Gemini?

Why should I follow where the comets go?

The firmament of Mind is just as high,

And in its spaces brighter planets show

Than any the astronomer can know,

And secrets deeper than infinity

Consider again our picture of the world about us, in its various aspects. How far is that picture reliable? What does it omit? What conclusions can be drawn?

Accepting the objective reality of the universe, still the question arises, how far, if at all, the presentation given by science can be trusted. The scientific theories of to-day differ greatly from those of a century ago; no one doubts that the theories of a century hence are likely to differ greatly from those of to-day; how then can we put faith in any of them?

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But it would be false to say that all is flux and nothing established. The discoveries in physics and in biology which stand, and seem likely to stand, are many. Sometimes, no doubt, a hypothesis has been proclaimed as a fact prematurely. Sometimes mistakes have been made in experiments or in deduction. Sometimes perfected instruments have enabled old observations to be superseded by better ones, and earlier theories have had to be revised. It may be that discoveries in the future will show that the structure of the atom is different from what is now supposed, or that the measurements put forward by the astronomers of to-day are ten times too large or ten times too small—or perhaps a thousand times. Nevertheless the general picture remains

The conclusions of science are tested, every day and on every hand, in their practical applications—in mechanics, communications, manufacture, agriculture, medicine. Everywhere they stand the test. In the main and as far as they go, we are bound to accept them as valid.

How far do they go?

On the physical side science has brought us a long way. The revelation of the inner structure of matter may be counted as the most marvellous achievement yet, in the material sphere, of the mind and hand of man. From the object to the molecule, from the molecule to the atom, from the atom to the electron, the explorers have pushed far into the secret of nature. But they have not brought us all the way. They know well that the heart of the secret lies farther still.

Whitehead tells us that, since there is motion every-

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where, everything must be an event. "The event", he says, "is the unit of things real." "For physics", he says again, "the thing itself is what it does" Matter he defines as "group-agitation", and nature as "a theatre for the interrelations of activities." Other philosophers have said the same; the universe is a process, and the process constitutes its reality. But can we find satisfaction there? One cannot help thinking that if you get rid of everything except a happening, there can be no happening either. Confucius said, "To know what we know, and know what we do not know, that is wisdom" Better to admit that here we reach the point where—as yet—we do not know.

On the psychical side science has gone much less far. Our knowledge of life and mind seems to be now at about the same stage as was man's knowledge of matter three or four centuries ago. Psychology is still awaiting its Galileo and its Newton. The key-science of electrobiology is still in its infancy. Physiologists have just begun merely to time and to measure the electric impulses along the nerve channels.

Only quite recently has it been recognized that the psychical and the physical elements in living organisms are not distinct and separated, one here one there, but that they are inseparably interfused throughout. And we have not even begun to guess how this comes about—not even in relation to our own minds. Sir Charles Sherrington, the eminent physiologist, has felt constrained to say: "Strictly we have to regard the relation of mind to brain as still not merely unsolved, but still devoid of a basis of its very beginning" In psychics, far sooner than in physics, we reach the

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point where Confucius bids us say "we do not know"<sup>1</sup>

The one sure conclusion that we can draw from our picture of the various aspects of the universe is the negative conclusion, that that picture must be incomplete. These aspects cannot be all. The universe, as we see it, cannot be a "closed system", it is obviously not self-created; it does not explain itself. Whatever is doubtful, this at least is as near certainty as thought can reach—that there must be something else

We have spoken of three aspects of the world about us; but that is an arrangement merely for convenience of discussion, and not arising out of the nature of things. There may well be a fourth aspect—a fifth—others beyond. Primitive man was altogether unaware of the aspect of the world which physical science has revealed; for him it did not exist. Civilized man perceives it. And he has gone further; he apprehends, though still only dimly, the next, the psychic

<sup>1</sup> The speculation may be hazarded that some day the distinction between life and mind may be eliminated. It has been usual to suppose the course of evolution to have been from primal matter, which was neither living nor conscious, to matter endowed with life but not with consciousness, and finally to matter endowed with both. The so-called "vegetable kingdom" is in the second class, the "animal kingdom" in the third. But is this more than an assumption? Is it not possible that, if the simplest organic cell has—as Sir Arthur Thomson believed—some degree of mentality (that is of awareness, power of choice and will)—this is itself the factor that makes it alive? "'Mind' or 'sentience'," he says, "is probably contemporaneous with life itself." We should then not need to assume two mysteries, in addition to the existence of matter—one some "vital element", or Bergson's *élan vital*, the other a subsequent accession of consciousness. There would only be mentality. As soon as, in some way, mentality is added to matter, and not until then, it becomes organic and living

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**aspect.** Why should we doubt that there are others as well ?

It is often said that the human mind is so constituted that, if such aspects indeed existed, it would never be able to perceive them. A man goes into his library followed by his dog; the dog will be aware of the books; it can see the volumes, smell them, touch them; but by no possibility can the mind of the dog understand the contents, say, of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It is commonly assumed that it must be the same with the mind of man and the true nature and ultimate meaning of the universe. And of course it may be so. Considering the origin of man from the lower organisms and the way in which his mind has been evolved, it would be surprising if it were not so. Nevertheless it may not be so.

To primitive man such matters as the microbe, the electron, radiation, the quantum, or the concepts of higher mathematics would have seemed altogether beyond the limits of human comprehension. Yet they have proved to be within them.

It is possible that even now we may be close to some brilliant discovery in psychics which will bring a number of phenomena, not yet understood—such as telepathy, hypnotism, water-divining perhaps, and the methods of communication between insects—into their places in an ordered scheme. Experimental psychology is eagerly seeking a theory of the nature of consciousness which can be established empirically.

By dint of trying, scientists may once more hit upon some sudden simplification: as Copernicus did when all the apparent motions of the sun and planets, which seemed so intricate and confused, were brought into

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order and harmony by his discovery of the actual movement of the earth; or Newton and Einstein when they presented the theories of gravitation and relativity; or J. J. Thomson and Rutherford, when the discovery of the electron revealed the common principle underlying the diversity of the chemical elements; or Darwin, with the origin of species; or Pasteur, when he proved the similar bacterial causes of many different and mysterious diseases. If that should come about, then man will at last be able to trace the whole course of development, from the simplest elementary stuff to the highest manifestations of mind—"the evolution of gas into genius." Speculation may go yet further, and envisage the discovery of other universes than ours, with radiations of a different kind, waves of a different speed, of which we are now completely unconscious; just as a wireless receiver tuned to one wave-length is completely unaffected by a broadcast on another wave-length.


Who can foresee whether, in the passage of the ages, these realms also, if such there be, may not be brought within the cognizance of man? Herbert Spencer made a division between the known, the unknown and the unknowable. But whether there is an unknowable is itself among the unknown.

However that may be, certain it is that, in our present age, we are far short of such knowledge as this. We must base our thinking upon whatever knowledge we have, hoping to enlarge it as discovery expands. Meanwhile the one point of certainty is its incompleteness. The one thing we know for sure is the fact of our ignorance. There must be something else.

To this point, then, science has brought us. Not

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necessarily to a dead end, but rather to a region where the broad road we have been following dwindles to a path, and the path fades into faint tracks, which seem to lead towards a new territory, vast and unexplored, that lies ahead of us.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANCIENT CREEDS AND MODERN KNOWLEDGE

OF the great religions of mankind—those that count their adherents in tens or in hundreds of millions—the youngest, Islam, was founded thirteen centuries ago; the oldest, Hinduism and Shintoism, were founded several thousand years ago; the others—Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism—at receding periods between. The world as we see it in this age is very different from the world as it was seen in any of those times

First, the reign of law in physical nature has been recognized. In the realm of matter at least—whatever dispute there may still be as to the realm of mind—it is established that effects follow causes uniformly and with certainty. "Nature never breaks her own law," said Leonardo da Vinci; "nature is constrained by the order of her own law which lives and works within her."

Secondly, the method of evolution is seen to be fundamental in the universe. The cosmos is a process. It is "act rather than fact." Growth, not sudden creation, is the key to its history.

Thirdly, although the size of the universe is of no special significance in relation to human life, it must have significance in relation to our idea of Deity. "The heavens", said Hazlitt, "have gone farther off and become astronomical." Our telescopes having revealed to us a universe five hundred million light-years across, with the probability of further immense

distances beyond, this cannot fail to affect the conception of a Deity who shall be present everywhere and always and yet be "personal"

In these matters, modern ideas clash with all the ancient creeds; except, indeed, Confucianism, that being a system of ethics rather than a theology or cosmogony. There is, however, another side. In certain other matters modern ideas tend to confirm fundamental features in the old beliefs

Science, having emerged from the materialistic, self-sufficient phase of the nineteenth century, now recognizes the incompleteness of its own presentation. Since it recognizes that there must be "something else" it gives room for Deity. Indeed, in so far as it accepts, and emphasizes, the principle of causality, and in so far as it perceives that the universe, as we see it, cannot be self-caused, science leads inevitably to the conclusion that there must be a causal factor not comprised within our view of the universe. If this be Deity, then science has made atheism impossible <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bertrand Russell rejects this view. He says "To infer a Creator is to infer a cause, and causal inferences are only admissible in science when they proceed from observed causal laws. Creation out of nothing is an occurrence which has not been observed. There is, therefore, no better reason to suppose that the world was caused by a Creator than to suppose that it was uncaused, either equally contradicts the causal laws that we can observe." This argument is open to question. It is true that we can arrive at a causal law only from observation. But once such a law has been established, we can make inferences from it that will extend beyond the range of observation. Creation out of nothing cannot be observed, and it also cannot be inferred from causal laws established by observation. Creation by some agency, not comprised in the cosmos as we perceive it, also cannot be observed, but, unlike the other, it *can* be inferred from causal laws that have been established by observation.

It may be said in reply that, if the universe we perceive is to

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Science, again—having cleared away the old notion of a physical world composed of “substances” which are solid and inert, and also having recognized that there is a vital and mental factor integral in nature—makes a spiritual view of the universe more tenable. Further, since science has itself revealed aspects of the world that were inconceivable by primitive man, it is bound to allow the possibility of other aspects existing which are still inconceivable in our present stage of knowledge.

When we see the whole cosmos as a system, diaphanous, dynamic, radiating, and interpenetrated, somehow, by mind, when we surmise that there are other aspects quite different from what we see; and when we feel certain that there must be a causal element which is beyond our cognizance—we are not far away from some, at least, of the ideas that were dominant with the founders of the ancient creeds. “A little philosophy”, as Bacon said, “inclineth man’s mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion.”

We can see how all these things, taken together—some working one way, some the other—give rise to the confusion of our times. The disagreements of modern knowledge with the old religions, intermingled

be regarded as the effect of causes, for the reason that everything is the effect of causes, then the Creator must also be an effect of causes, and those the effects of other causes, and so *ad infinitum*. To this there is no answer. We come to the problem of the existence of anything, and that we are unable even to approach. But it does not follow from this impotence that we are precluded from saying that the phase of existence which we are able to perceive, namely the universe of which we are part, is not self-contained and self-caused, and therefore must be caused otherwise.

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with the agreements, are the main cause of the confusion. If there were disagreements only, the position would be clearer. The intelligence of mankind would be bound, sooner or later and at whatever cost in turmoil and conflict, to discard the earlier beliefs altogether and to start afresh. But since there are agreements, and on points which are of the very essence of the matter, there cannot be any such simple clearance.

The ancient creeds do in fact retain their vitality all over the world. And each of them commands a great body of orthodox adherents, who go much further than preserving the doctrines on which there is agreement, who insist that the creed must be accepted as a whole, and, as nearly as may be, in its original form. The very fact, they say, that part has been justified by modern science, is a reason why the whole must be preserved and cherished. If not—so runs the argument—if once the authority for any part were admitted to be invalid, no authority would remain for any other part. Surrender anything and you lose everything. Therefore those elements in the ancient religions which present-day knowledge has shown to be incredible are tenaciously defended. They still form part of the daily presentation of the creeds by the organized churches. So the confusion of our age persists.

This state of things, continuing decade after decade and generation after generation, causes immense mischief in many ways.

Millions of people, grouped, usually by heredity, in different religious organizations, stand separate from each other; they feel themselves to be morally apart, alienated, sometimes antagonistic. Where different

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religions exist side by side in the same country or in neighbouring countries, there is often continuous friction, culminating sometimes in outbursts of ferocious violence. Worst, perhaps, among all the shameful episodes in human history may be counted the so-called "wars of religion". For centuries men massacred each other in the cause of their Faith. Those wars are over, but the animosity that instigated them is not dead.

In India, for example, the antagonism between Hindus and Mohammedans is often intense. It makes far more difficult the problems, formidable enough already, of the government of the Indian Empire. It is a constant hindrance to the moral and material progress of the Indian peoples. Occasionally it flames up in fierce communal conflict.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, the report of a Government Commission describes the rioting that took place in Cawnpore, in March 1931. In the course of a demonstration, "Hindus and Muslims came to blows. This developed into a riot of unprecedented violence and peculiar atrocity, which spread with unexpected rapidity through the whole city and even beyond it. Murders, arson and looting were wide-spread for three days, before the rioting was definitely brought under control. Afterwards it subsided gradually. The loss of life and property was great. The number of verified deaths was 300, but the death-roll is known to have been larger and was probably between four and five hundred. A large number of temples and mosques were desecrated or burnt or destroyed, and a very large number of houses were burnt and pillaged." Although this outbreak was exceptional in its violence and duration, it is by no means unique.

Nor are such conflicts unknown, though on a smaller scale, even in Ireland to-day. In July 1935 fighting broke out in Belfast between Catholics and Protestants and continued for a week. Five persons were killed, some hundreds suffered from gunshot wounds and other injuries, sixty-two houses were burnt or wrecked, and over 1,600 people were for a time rendered homeless.

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The differences between religions are looked upon as absolute and permanent. Indeed, if the distinctive beliefs, in their orthodox presentation, are sincerely held and acted upon, this divergence is inevitable; and it must continue indefinitely.

I recall that a few years ago the head of one of the principal Christian communities in Jerusalem made this observation to an official of the Palestine Government, who invited him to co-operate with the leaders of the other religions: "How can those," he said, "whose doctrines are inspired by the direct commands of God come to any agreement with those whose doctrines do not rest upon that foundation?"

It is held by almost everyone that these differences, these incompatibilities, are facts in the world situation which must be accepted as definite and unchangeable. There is no expectation that any one among the rival creeds, in the form now presented, will be recognized as true by the adherents of the others, and become, within any future that can be foreseen, the single faith of all mankind. So the world, it is held, must shape itself as best it can on the assumption that these are given facts. For all time there must be Hindus and Mohammedans, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Buddhists—each holding, whether by conviction or by loyalty of inheritance, a specific religious creed, in the form, more or less, in which it was promulgated centuries or millenniums ago, each practising its own special observances, with the same differences in doctrine and presentation, as now, each remaining intellectually separate from the rest. Enlightened opinion, it is thought, may perhaps secure a mutual toleration. Where it fails, govern-

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ments may succeed in quietening passions, or, in the last resort, in imposing peace by force. But that is the utmost that can be hoped.

The divisions themselves are to be accepted as fundamental. Always, as now, there must be people in different places, or living side by side in the same place, who profess religious faiths that are diverse, and in some respects contradictory. It is right—say those who hold this view—or if not right, it is certainly inevitable, that the same doctrine should be regarded as true in Mecca and untrue in Rome; that the record of some event should, in a church, be accepted as historic, and, in a synagogue, be rejected as false; that a belief such as the transmigration of souls may properly be held in Asia to correspond with the facts of the universe, and in Europe or America to be a baseless speculation.

So long as this principle prevails, the mind of man must remain bewildered and human society chaotic.

If the crystallizing of the ancient creeds has harmful effects through making their estrangement perpetual, it has effects no less harmful upon each community internally.

Morality ought not to be static. As the generations and the centuries pass, the ethical code of mankind should evolve. It should change with experience, with discoveries, with changes of environment, with the development of ideas. But so far as a code of conduct is prescribed by a religion, and so far as the religion is rigid and unchangeable, this process is inhibited. Rules ordained, once for all, by a supernatural power,

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cannot be altered by any lower, or later, authority. Fundamentalism stops the evolution of morals. Yet the evolution of morals is vital to the welfare of mankind.

The fixed authority of an ancient creed may have disastrous effects also upon the government of States. It has supported the doctrine of the "Divine Right of Kings", and must bear responsibility for all the evil consequences of that doctrine in the history of Europe.

The doctrine of Divine Right is often held to give supernatural authority to priesthoods as well as to Kings. It is the parent of clericalism. And clericalism, as history shows, has ever been one of the chief hindrances to social progress. It hampers the natural impulses of men to strive for their own welfare. Under such influence, religion may well become, as Marx described it, "opium for the people". To counter it, anti-clericalism arises. Bitter controversies are waged, which sometimes and in some countries dominate political thought and action for years or even generations, cutting across normal movements for social progress. France and Italy have given examples in the nineteenth century, Russia, Spain and Mexico in the twentieth. This is an ingredient in the confusion of the modern world.

Again, the old orthodoxies carry forward into our own times some beliefs, habits of mind, customs, principles of education, which are clearly harmful to the well-being of man. They hinder him from benefiting by the fruits of his own experience. Regard epidemics as the mysterious work of God and they will continue. Trace their origin to bacterial infection, and take



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precautions against it, and the epidemics will be stopped

Almost all the eastern religions foster a spirit of fatalism. The very word "Islam" means "submission to the will of God". Hinduism and Buddhism regard the world either as illusion, or as something evil, or at best worthless. They urge spiritual detachment, rather than effort for betterment, as the way of salvation. The Buddha declared, "I teach only one thing, suffering and emancipation from suffering"; and the Dhammapada says, "There is no misery like existence." "The Hindu religion in its higher forms," says Dr. Edwyn Bevan, "taught men rather to emancipate themselves in spirit from a world which was incurably unsatisfactory than attempt to make the actual world different. In its lower forms it even incorporated in itself those very customs which destroyed the vitality of the race at its root. So far from disposing men to change them, it made it almost impossibly hard to do so. It made the attempt appear dreadful impiety." Under such teaching, disease, famine, flood, banditry, had a favourable environment. The eastern creeds have helped to perpetuate the very evils the existence of which was the reason for their detachment.

Christianity also has often been ready to sacrifice this world to the next. It has often "insisted on the fundamental antagonism of the inner to the outer life, and made the perfection of the spirit depend on the mortification of the flesh". From time to time it has developed a Puritanism which, passing beyond a fine seriousness and noble self-discipline, has expanded beyond all bounds the sense of sin and excluded all joy.

The Puritan through Life's sweet garden goes  
To pluck the thorn and cast away the rose

Judaism, again, wherever it has emphasized the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Pentateuch, and has found an absolute rule of life in its interpretation by the scribes and the rabbinical schools, has developed a restricted and unbalanced system of education, this in turn has tended to produce among the orthodox a narrow, formalistic type of mind.

All the religious creeds have used their authority—not always and everywhere, but frequently and in most places, and especially in the East—to the detriment of women. They have limited the freedom of one-half of the human race; they have lessened the respect of men for women and of women for themselves, and have constricted their lives. In India, again, the caste system, vehemently defended in the name of religion, has degraded, in the course of centuries, thousands of millions of people, child marriage, similarly defended, has caused distress and deterioration beyond measure

Cast a glance over past history and contemporary conditions. Take all these factors into account. Try to estimate how much denial of happiness, how much physical suffering and mental misery, how much avoidable destitution, disease and death, have been due, in all the countries of the world, to the dead hand of dogma. Who shall find a statistic that could count that total?

Even this is not all. The founders of most of the ancient creeds (all except Buddhism and Confucianism) assumed, as a matter of course, arbitrary intervention

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by supernatural powers in human affairs. They had not reached the majesty of the conception of immutable law, of effect following causes with certainty and always.

The Greek religion, as Homer described it, supposed a constant interference by gods in the course of events. Dreams are sent to lead men to take this action or that; defeated warriors are wafted away in a cloud; men's fate is determined, not by the results of their own characters and deeds, but by the favour or enmity of rival gods and goddesses. If we read the epics, not as poetry but as expressing a view of life, they profoundly offend our sense of justice.

Greek mythology survives in the world of to-day only as poetry, and not as a philosophy, but ideas not dissimilar are interwoven in the ancient creeds that still influence the conduct of mankind. The Book of Job, for example, is commonly regarded as one of the highest expressions of religious feeling. But if one looks beyond the unsurpassed beauty of its diction and the spirituality of its yearning for God, it may be seen that, in essence, the Book of Job assumes that man is but the plaything of Deity. There is no belief that the world is animated by a spirit of justice. Virtue may issue in disaster equally with vice, and the majesty of God will justify either. Such a doctrine cuts at the root all striving to reach welfare by ordered effort. It undermines morals. It leaves a stoic fatalism as the only recourse. To sap the belief in the reign of law in the spiritual world, to imagine arbitrary intervention between normal cause and effect, is not, as is often represented, to provide a sound foundation for ethics. On the contrary, it would rob ethics of any rational basis, and would dissolve moral philosophy in theology.

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The mischiefs are many that must be laid to the account of an uncritical devotion to ancient dogmas now known to be incredible. One still remains to be recalled. It is the greatest mischief of all. It is the harm done to religion itself.

The world does indeed urgently need religion. Men will not live like beasts of the field, intent only on material things and physical satisfactions. A spiritual striving is innate. The intellectual conviction that the universe we perceive is not all, leaves us with a sense of void. We have been asked to believe many incredible things, but that there is nothing to be believed would be the most incredible of all.

And religion has been, all through the ages, a chief bulwark of morals. It is "a discipline as well as a faith". It is "morality touched by emotion". Were religion to disappear as a factor in the life of mankind, the whole structure of morality would tremble and sway.

Imagine for a moment that all the religious organizations were to dissolve; that all the religious edifices were to be closed, and all the priests and ministers of the creeds were to cease their labours. Mankind would be the poorer. There has been gathered during the centuries a great treasure, through the lives and teachings of the founders of faiths, of the prophets and the poets, the saints and the sages, which is a precious heritage of the modern world. It would be a disaster for mankind were that treasure to be dissipated and lost.

Yet we may clearly see, if we look at the actual conditions around us, that there is a trend that way. And the danger is due, not only to declared enemies

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but to some among the most devoted and faithful guardians. "Religion is declining", as has been well said, "for the very simple reason that all religions are full of obsolete science of various kinds; especially obsolete cosmology and obsolete psychology." Their defenders, if they be orthodox, insist that they shall so remain. Few would hold nowadays the extreme doctrine of Tertullian—"Credo quia impossibile", "I believe for the very reason that it is impossible"; but many still say, "I believe although it is impossible"

So there is presented to millions of upright men and women, in all countries and of all religious communities, a formidable dilemma, a tragic choice. Either they must reject the definite religious beliefs, and discard the helpful religious communion, that are at hand; or else they must acquiesce in at least some doctrines and dogmas, which intellect tells them are untrue, and experience shows to be harmful. From this dilemma there constantly arises an acute mental conflict. In an agony of spirit, the mind wrestles with the choice—a choice between that which it has been taught in childhood to believe, which it thinks it should believe, which it may, to its very centre, intensely long to believe, and, on the other hand, that which it finds, in honesty, it can in fact believe. From this conflict many emerge on the side of doctrinal conviction, perhaps with a firmer faith. Many emerge on the side of negation. But very many never reach a definite issue at all, they wander all their lives, confused and wavering, vaguely complaining that "nowadays one does not know what to believe"

So the modern world tends to fall back into formalism, reciting, with indifference, ancient rituals, emptied

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of much of their meaning. This is why it is—we may clearly see—that the traditional religions often do not grip. This is why there is the divorce between religion and daily life, and one main reason why the contemporary world is bewildered and restless



## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTUITION, MYSTICISM, MIRACLES

WE are seeking possible lines of further advance; and we must next ask ourselves whether there may not be some other way of progress altogether, some way quite different from the laborious method which takes scientific knowledge as its starting-point and reason as its instrument. When the paths of sense-perception and inductive reasoning fade away, can we not reach the regions that lie beyond by a direct flight of mind or spirit? May not mystic vision and intuition bring us straight to where we wish to be?

The founders and prophets of the great Faiths have proclaimed the reality of personal communion with the Divine. Saints and mystics of every creed have proclaimed it. All over the world sects have been founded, practices have been devised, in the hope of finding apt ways to catch the gleam of heavenly radiance.

Among the Hindus the system of Yoga is ancient and wide-spread. The Buddhists have their Dhyāna, the Moslems Sufism, the Jews Cabalism, the Christians various forms of mysticism. Tens of thousands of men and women, scattered through the ages and over the world, have felt a certainty that they, individually, have held communion with the Spirit that animates the universe. Many among them have told us of intimations coming in the silence, like a voice speaking—sometimes vaguely, as a music, sometimes definitely, giving guidance, answering prayers or questions. And

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sometimes there have been visions of ineffable bliss, sudden illuminations from the Divine<sup>1</sup>

Far short of this mystic intensity, there is the normal process of the mind which is called intuition. It is akin to instinct. Psychologists tell us that it is in the region of the subconscious. "Every animal, Man included", says a contemporary writer, "possesses two sets of mental activity: the one instinctive, automatic, innate, the other intelligent, plastic and acquired. These two activities are always blended. They may differ immensely in degrees of development, but they never completely separate from each other. The insect mind and the human mind differ mainly in the development of these two factors. The Insect, though predominantly instinctive, possesses also glimmerings of reason. Though the life of Man is so filled with rational judgement, yet underneath are those primitive instincts."

Intuition is, indeed, the basis of all human thought and action. The infant's impulse to movement, to speech, is intuitive. Self-preservation, hunger, sex—all the primary impulses, are intuitive. So are the emotion of sympathy, which lies at the base of ethics, and the sense of beauty, from which springs art.

There is a tendency among some thinkers of the present day to exalt intuition and to depreciate intellect. It is partly the outcome of the recent discoveries in psychology of Freud and his school. It comes partly

<sup>1</sup> Accounts of such experiences by Englishmen in our own day have been given by Lord Conway of Allington in his book, *A Pilgrim's Quest for the Divine*, and by Sir Francis Younghusband in *A Venture of Faith*. The Oxford Group Movement is partly based upon a belief in "guidance" of that character.



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from the teachings in philosophy of Nietzsche, Bergson and Croce. Political movements in Germany and Italy, drawing their ideas largely from those teachings, have brought this tendency into the world of practical affairs, and have given it a powerful influence in the shaping of events. The importance it has gained in politics confers on the principle of intuition an added prestige. We see all around us what has been called "the retreat from Reason"

This is a matter which affects religion, morals, politics—everything. It is essential to examine it closely.

Do our normal intuitive thoughts and actions come to us out of the spiritual nature of man? Do they come with an authority superior to any which intellect can confer? Are they the seat of a conscience, divinely implanted, which, if we would only listen to it, would be an infallible guide to right and wrong?

Or are they no more than part of our physical inheritance from the long development of organic life; nothing more than the instinct of the amoeba developed and elaborated, not superior to reason, but merely the outcome of an earlier, pre-rational stage of evolution?

When we pass from normal intuition to what are claimed to be mystical revelations, the problem takes a somewhat different shape. If these are indeed supernatural messages, their authority must be absolute. But are they real messages, objective, coming truly from the Something-else which is other than the world of our perception? Or are they only ideas coming from within, subjective, nothing more than a trick of

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the brain? Or are some in the one class, some in the other? And, if so, how are we to judge which is which?

Science will not exclude the possibility of authentic messages from without. Cautious in accepting or rejecting theories within her own recognized domain, she will be even more cautious before rejecting, as well as before accepting, theories which relate to the vast region that lies, as yet, outside.

The fact that mystics and ascetics are sometimes of neurotic temperament, and often receive their impressions when their bodies have been brought into a state which is more or less abnormal, need not involve a negative conclusion. William James, who did more than anyone to explore this region in a scientific spirit, is clear on this point. He says, in his classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: "If there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm, it might well be that the neurotic temperament would furnish the chief condition of the requisite receptivity." And again: "Just as our primary wide-awake consciousness throws open our senses to the touch of things material, so it is logically conceivable that *if there be* higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so *might be* our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them. The hubbub of the waking life might close a door which in the dreamy Subliminal might remain ajar or open." Or as Bernard Shaw puts it in his *Saint Joan*.

"*Joan* I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God.

"*Robert* They come from your imagination

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History is full of the records of prophets proclaiming a holy mission who have been judged by their contemporaries, or by succeeding generations, to have been false prophets. There may be, not only conscious deception preying upon credulity, but any degree of delusion, up to insanity and religious mania<sup>1</sup>

Besides, if intuition, or instinct, were regarded as possessing absolute authority, its earliest expressions would have become permanent. We should still be in the stage of primitive animism, seeing spirits in the streams and the trees, phantom terrors in the jungle, gods in the sun and the moon. We should still be in the stage of augurs and medicine-men, shaping our actions by portents and magic. And we might still be in the stage of the horrible. For if religious imagination gave Apollo and Athene to the Greeks, it also gave Moloch to the peoples of Western Asia, and their bloodthirsty divinities to the Maya. Dr. Otto, in his well-known work, *The Idea of the Holy*, says that "the 'fearful' and horrible, and even at times the revolting and the loathsome", are a primitive expression of religion, which is "quite natural" This, he says, "is later more and more felt to be inadequate, until it is finally altogether discarded as 'unworthy'" But if the intuitive religious sense is to be regarded as possessing absolute authority, how, when once a practice has been adopted, can there ever be a "discarding"? Must men wait for some new and different intuition?

<sup>1</sup> In Jerusalem, in 1920, I was told that there were at that time three men each publicly proclaiming himself to be the Messiah. The people of the city were so accustomed to such occurrences that no interest was aroused.

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And if it comes, how are they to judge between the authority of the new and of the old ?

Amid much that may be doubtful this at least is certain, that a claim to revelation, inspiration, mystic communion, is not to be accepted merely for the reason that it has been made.

So also with regard to the intuitions in the province of morals, which we term the dictates of conscience. Conscience may err. ✓

We may open the pages of history almost haphazard and we shall find numberless instances of deeds done by excellent men from the most conscientious motives which later times have unanimously condemned as acts of cruel persecution or ruthless barbarism. Every persecution springs from conscience. Further, one man's conscience will give direction in one way, his neighbour's in the opposite. One man will be a "conscientious objector", even to the death, against some law or custom which another accepts as obviously right. If it were true that there is a natural instinct, implanted in every human being, which is an independent and infallible guide to right and wrong, then mankind would always have been, and would be now, of one mind on every question of right conduct. Obviously no such unanimity exists, or has ever existed. So it is clear that the fact that a man holds, however sincerely and tenaciously, that "this is a right thing for me to do", does not of itself make it so. It is clear also that mysticism, as William James says, "is too private, and also too various, in its utterances to be able to claim a universal authority". The modern world, seeking a foundation for belief, cannot find it in a simple acceptance of any and every mystic experience,

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or of the dictates of individual consciences. There must be some test of authenticity, some criterion of judgement. Where can it be found?

In earlier ages force was often the simple test. A faith was established by the crude method of suppressing the unbelievers. When it had become supreme, it was thereby proved to be divine. But in the modern world you cannot kill the unbeliever, nor even silence him. And as the nations come more closely into touch it is realized that the infidelity which would have to be suppressed in one place may be the orthodoxy which would be the suppressor in another. Whatever else may be the test, force is not.

In earlier times, again, the seal of revelation was seen in "signs and wonders", in miracles.

The word "miracle", as ordinarily used, includes at least four different kinds of events, and it is important to distinguish between them. It may mean an event which is definitely contrary to the known order of nature, such as one material substance being changed into another chemically different, or a stone statue bending its head or giving utterance to words. Or, secondly, it may mean an event which in appearance is contrary to the order of nature, but which in fact may not be so, such as the cure of an illness under the stress of emotion or shock, or through influences emanating from another person. Thirdly, an event which is normal in itself may be regarded as a miracle because of abnormal circumstances in which it takes place; for example, the breaking of a drought following a prayer for rain. And fourthly, the term is used of occurrences which are represented as not being in the

physical sphere at all, such as "messages from outside", or apparitions.

It is this fourth class of cases that we have been considering, and the question now is whether they can be validated by any of the other three, whether "signs and wonders" authenticate revelation.

Anyone who holds that the principle of the uniformity of nature has been conclusively established by science—at least in the material sphere—will need evidence that is quite incontrovertible before he accepts as true the account of any exception to that principle. As an illustration, it is stated in the Old Testament (in the seventh chapter of the Book of Exodus) that, in obedience to a divine command, "Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent." The reader is intended to believe that "a rod", that is a piece of wood, which if examined would have been found to have had the ordinary qualities of wood-fibre, was suddenly changed into an animal's body with the skeleton, the organs, the muscles and the skin of a reptile. Incontrovertible evidence that this actually occurred is not forthcoming. In the sacred books and saintly records of almost all the religions there are many accounts of miracles, more or less of the same kind. When it is said that the old orthodoxes require belief in some things that are incredible, the question is often asked whether, after all, there is anything that we can definitely class as incredible. Miracles of this order must be so classed. Even if anyone, with excess of caution, were unwilling to allow absolute certainty even there, he could hardly escape this admission that it is far more likely that those who have recorded physical events having happened contrary to the order of nature

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were mistaken or deceived, or that their records were tampered with, than that such events should have taken place

If it is said that the events must have been wrongly described, and that they are capable of some natural explanation, that is an abandonment of the claim that a "miracle" had occurred. The event, whatever it was, would no longer have any significance as a test of the supernatural authority of the prophet or saint in whose story it appears.

If it is said that the events must have taken place because records, the historicity of which is not disputed, show that the minds and conduct of great numbers of people were in fact affected, it must be answered that this is not a proof that the phenomena, as described, actually occurred. It is a proof only that people, who may have been unduly credulous, believed that they occurred—obviously a different thing

If it is said, again, that the accounts, whether true or not, should be treated as true, because a belief in them has led to results which were beneficial, such a plea—apart from the question of intellectual honesty—is again an abandonment of the miracle as fact. It is a surrender of the claim that the miracle, in itself, was proof of the divinity of the message. Evidence which is accepted only because it is advantageous to accept it, is no evidence.

When we turn to those events, classed as 'miraculous', which are in the second of our categories—the sudden healing of the sick through the "laying on of hands", or under the stress of religious excitement—we come to matters which stand on a very different footing. No one can doubt the reality of the influence of the mind

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on the condition of the body. The physical effects of the various emotions are among the commonplaces of physiology and of medicine. A piece of good news, or a piece of bad news, may have an unmistakable effect upon the condition of a sick man. "Happiness", it has been said, "is the best tonic". There is no reason, therefore, to question the possibility of many of the recorded cures which have been regarded as miraculous. Dr. Alexis Carrel, in his *Man the Unknown*, giving a wide acceptance to these claims, says that "the miracle is chiefly characterized by an extreme acceleration of the processes of organic repair".

But once this is established, is it right to use the word "miracle" in such cases? By showing successfully that the events described may well be true, since they are not, after all, outside the order of nature, have not the defenders of "the miraculous" abandoned their own position? If these events are natural, the question of the reality of the supernatural no longer arises. The psychic influence of the healer, or of the ceremony, is real, the religious emotion in the mind of the patient is real; the physical effects are real; but whether all this is due to direct divine intervention has now become an open question, since both scientists and theologians have come to agree that natural causes would suffice. That being so, the possession of such powers of healing can no longer be regarded as definite proof of a supernatural mission, lending to the utterances of the prophet or saint an absolute authority.

The holy life of an ascetic, again, has often been taken to give special validity to what he says. This also must be considered an unsafe guide. The character of the preacher is no guarantee of the truth of his doctrine.



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Exceptional virtue is one thing; divine insight may be another. Further, the saints of one religion say different things from the saints of another religion; both cannot be right. The world cannot find here the sure test by which to judge between this creed and that, between one claim to mystic inspiration and another.

Nor can we escape the same conclusion when we come to our third class of events usually included under the name of miracles—those which are abnormal, not in themselves, but in their circumstances. For the evidence in these cases is never adequate. When prayer is offered and the rain falls, the fact in itself does not tell us whether it is consequence or coincidence. Only repeated experience could show, and that is never forthcoming.

There are those who say that, after all, everything is miracle. "Why ' who makes much of a miracle?" wrote Walt Whitman, "As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles." Or as Laurence Housman puts it, "Find something that isn't a miracle, you'll have cause to wonder then." And no doubt this, in a sense, is true. There is no common thing or usual event which, for the philosophic mind, does not touch what is termed the supernatural. But to introduce that fact in this connexion merely confuses thought. We seek to know whether there are special marks of the hand of God which validate the truth of particular revelations. To say that the hand of God is in everything evades the question.

So we find, viewing the matter as a whole, that "the miraculous" does not help us. Indeed it is a hindrance. In the modern world, the clinging to miracles—which

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for the purposes of this discussion must be defined as events outside the order of nature—is, without question, one of the chief causes of the weakened hold of religion. It alienates people of scientific mind. Where there is religious doubt, it tries to settle it by methods that cause greater doubt. By offering physical tests for spiritual things, it lowers religion to a materialistic plane. "The craving for signs and wonders," says Dr. Inge, "—that broad road which attracts so many converts and wins so rapid a success—leads religion at last to its destruction, as Christ seems to have warned His own disciples." To quote Dr. Otto: "Here, too, as in the case of the fearful and terrible, progress to a higher stage of development shows the gradual elimination of the miraculous, and so we see how, on the more enlightened levels, 'miracle' begins to fade away; how Christ is at one with Mohammed and Buddha in declining the role of mere 'wonder-worker';<sup>1</sup> how Luther dismisses the 'outward miracles' disparagingly as 'jugglery' or 'apples and nuts for children', and finally how the 'supernaturalism' of miracle is purged from religion . . ."

Is there any other quarter where we may look for the test we need?

Many would find it in the authority of sacred scriptures or of an established Church. But the absolute authority, in every particular, of the sacred books of any religion is unacceptable to modern thought. One of the most eminent among the recent leaders of the

<sup>1</sup> See *The Koran*, Sura xvii 95, 111, Sale's Translation, pp. 214-15, and C. T. Strauss, *The Buddha and His Doctrine*, p. 103. "The Buddha specially forbade his disciples to perform so-called miracles"

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Anglican Church, Bishop Charles Gore, wrote. "It seems to me (as to St Chrysostom of old) quite impossible to maintain the literal infallibility of the Gospel records" And again, "The power of naked appeal to the infallible book—chapter by chapter and verse by verse—was exactly what the New Learning of our day has cut at the root" Numberless declarations in the same sense have been made by writers of authority belonging to almost every creed But if the authority of sacred books is open to question in any particular, we no longer find in them the certain guide, the final test, for which we are searching We have to discriminate, we have to pick and choose; we have to apply some other test than the words of the books themselves

As to decisive authority being vested in a Church, when it is asked on what that authority itself is based, we are led at once into a logical circle The authority of the Church authenticates the revelation, and it is the revelation that gives its authority to the Church

Some say that the test may be found in the common agreement of mankind Find the points in which all the creeds concur and the true voice of God will be found there also But apart from some simple ethical precepts, there is hardly any doctrine which will command the allegiance of the Buddhists and Confucians, who comprise one-third of the human race, together with that of the adherents of the theistic religions Even if they were excluded, this principle would still give no guidance with respect to the many fundamental points of doctrine on which Christians, Jews, Moslems and Hindus differ from one another. Further, the

doctrine of general assent would have crystallized religion in its more primitive forms. Seneca maintained that the gods of the Roman pantheon must exist because the belief was upheld by common consent; and Socrates himself is recorded to have declared at his trial that he believed in the godhead of the sun and moon "which is the common creed of all men." We cannot find here the criterion of truth.

Some take refuge in assuming that there are two separate spheres—that of science which is the province of reason, and that of religion which is the province of intuition. The briefest inquiry shows that both elements enter into both spheres. The brain of the scientist, like every other brain, works at bottom through intuition. In religion it is obvious that the rational and the intuitive elements are intertwined.

Many even of the Indian thinkers recognize that intuition cannot be relied upon apart from reason. The eminent Hindu philosopher, Professor Sir S. Radhakrishnan, writes, "In order to be able to say that religious experience reveals reality, in order to be able to transform religious certitude into logical certainty, we are obliged to give an intellectual account of the experience. Hindu thought has no mistrust of reason. There can be no final breach between the two powers of the human mind, reason and intuition." And he comes finally to the pragmatic test "The truths revealed in the Vedas are capable of being re-experienced on compliance with ascertained conditions. We can discriminate between the genuine and the spurious in religious experience, not only by means of logic, but

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assigning the one to intuition and the other to reason; nor for accepting either of these as superior to the other. But there is this difference between them—that, although reason may err as well as intuition, it does carry within itself the means of remedy, and intuition does not. ✓

## CHAPTER SIX

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The ordinary man of to-day, eager for the peace and welfare of the world, seeking a way out of the confusion of the age, and realizing that there are both agreements and disagreements between modern knowledge and all the ancient creeds, must ask himself in what direction he would wish the religions to move. Assume for the moment that the creeds are not rigid, and that change is possible. What form should that change take? A generation hence, a century hence, where would we wish the religions to stand?

\* The ancient religions are compounded of elements that are various. They offer explanations of the universe and of man's place in it. They offer a code of morals, and reasons for obeying it. And they offer an outlet for man's emotions—his craving for help in loneliness, for comfort and relief in suffering and sorrow, for the means to strengthen his good impulses and to resist the bad. Out of these elements arises a conception of Deity as at once creator and prime mover, law-giver and judge, father and friend.

Theologians are ready to make the most confident assertions as to the nature and actions of God—His purpose is this, His will is that, His qualities are so-and-so; "as if", says Matthew Arnold. "he were a man in the next street." We could, indeed, find grounds for such assertions if we were to accept as direct revelation all the accounts given in the sacred books of the religions.

or of any one religion, or all the records of the visions of saints and mystics. But we cannot accept these entire and unquestioningly, since we should at once be involved in contradictions and led into some beliefs that are certainly untrue. We are bound to exercise a choice, under the guidance of rational judgement. But the moment we do that, we are seeking a knowledge that shall be independent of specific revelation; and then we find how scanty are the data, falling within the present limits of our understanding, on which such knowledge can be based.

The principle of causation is our best hope. If the cosmos is the effect and God the cause, the nature of the cause must be seen, if only in part, in the nature of the effect. From the music we infer the musician, from the picture the painter, from the thought the thinker, and from the universe the Deity. "The more we understand individual objects", says Spinoza, "the more we understand God." And since there is mind in the cosmos there must be mind in the Deity.

Minds of the human order have will and purpose. It cannot be supposed that a mind of the cosmic, creative order, fundamentally different as it must be, would be without those qualities. We speak of "the blind forces of nature", the natural agencies are, in the main, unconscious of what they do, but that is no reason for thinking that there is not will and purpose behind them.

Can we go further than these generalities, and find, in human history and present civilization, a fuller indication of the nature of Deity?

Among the thinkers who accept causation and the

existence of Deity as the starting-point, and mind, will and purpose as attributes, four different views have been prevalent on the relationship of God and the world. One of these sees God as historic; creation as an act in the past, done once for all, the universe set going under forces which work themselves out automatically through all time. A second view sees God as the author of the primordial laws of nature but also as perennially active and watchful; intervening, some think, only through a single Prophet or Mediator, or from time to time through a few of the elect; or intervening, others believe, in ways consistent with the laws of nature, by specific but frequent acts of will. A third sees Deity at work everywhere and always, here and now and in all things: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father." The fourth is the pantheistic view, which can find no boundary between God and universe. It conceives God not merely as external, as Something-else. If a simile is looked for in modern science, it speculates whether the relation between Deity and the world of mind and matter may not be akin to the relationship between a living body and the billions of cells that compose it, each with its own individuality, but each permeated by the life of the whole organism. It is a view that sees in God, as Wordsworth saw,

A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things

Or, as Elizabeth Browning said,



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Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes<sup>1</sup>

When we ask whether we can find some guide to the nature of God by seeing it reflected back from the world, we have to consider at the outset whether everything that is and happens on our planet is to be looked upon as God's doing. It will at once be clear that it does not matter, in that connexion, which of those four views is taken. Let one man say that, creation having happened, Deity has withdrawn itself from the affairs of the cosmos; let another say that God is ever present and sometimes active; let a third hold that He is the constant mover and guardian of all life and action; and let a fourth identify universe with Deity—it will make no difference here. All four must agree that in the last resort the divine responsibility is absolute. The results of action, and the results of abstention, must equally be attributed to Deity. Abstention is also an act. Ultimate responsibility is indivisible, since nothing is conceived with which it can be divided. If any, then all; you must attribute everything or nothing to Providence<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Epictetus wrote "Concerning the Gods, there are who deny the very existence of the Godhead, others say that it exists, but neither bestirs nor concerns itself nor has forethought for anything. A third party attribute to it existence and forethought, but only for great and heavenly matters, not for anything that is on earth. A fourth party admit things on earth as well as in heaven, but only in general, and not with respect to each individual. A fifth, of whom were Ulysses and Socrates, are those that cry — 'I move not without thy knowledge'."

<sup>2</sup> This connects with the problem of Evil, which is discussed in Chapter Eight

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On the question, however, which of those four doctrines really corresponds with the facts of the universe, or whether any one of them does so, no one can claim to speak with assurance. So also with the question of the human soul, and its immortality, and a variety of other questions: in the province of religion the area of uncertainty is vast. There is therefore a wide scope for reasonable difference of opinion; and differing views will find expression in differing creeds.

Even when there is agreement as to doctrine, there must be variety in the presentation. Religion caters for the whole range of humanity, with all its diverse characteristics—of race and tradition and culture, of sex and age, of personal temperament. It would be wrong to desire, as it would be futile to expect, the evolution of a single standardized religion, uniform in creed and liturgy. Any future development, while it may bring an approximation between the creeds, cannot be expected to lead to an ending of all diversity.

Secondly, a religion, to be effective, must be corporate. Giving room for idiosyncrasy its constitution must be collective. Many people need to have offered to them, at the hands of some organization, a system of belief. The exceptional thinker may frame his creed for himself, may dispense with churches and start afresh; but not—in the present stage of civilization—the ordinary man, with limited learning and pressing occupations. Multitudes of men, and even greater multitudes of women, find satisfaction in prayer. Although, to the sceptic, prayer may seem to be no more than auto-suggestion, everyone will admit that, for the worshipper, it may be a tuning of the mind to

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good things, its confessions may make him more alive to his own shortcomings Fellowship vitalizes prayer. "Devotional contact", said Oliver Wendell Holmes, "makes a worshipping throng as different from the same numbers praying apart as a bed of coals is from a trail of scattered cinders."

Thirdly, in this and other ways, religion must offer an outlet for emotions; it brings in poetry as a servant of the spirit. Poetry weaves for religion legends and parables, creates symbols and inspires liturgies and ceremonies It calls in the aid of architecture and music and all the sister arts. It puts us in touch with prophets and saints and martyrs, who lived and enjoyed, suffered and died, for the sake of spiritual things It brings us under influences that exhale from the traditions of thousands of years; links the past with the present and the present with the future. The sacraments of religion, permeated by poetry, lend dignity and solace to the familiar things of life—to love and labour, birth and death

This is why no philosophy has ever become a religion. A philosophy may inspire or guide the formulation of a creed, but it cannot itself be a creed. It has been well said that "Technical philosophical terms are inadequate to express human emotions They call forth in our soul no echo, no resonant notes of any kind; they do not lead us from the pure intellectual conception to the living idea." To the philosopher the universe, the society, are the environment of Man, but to the ordinary person his environment is his home, his family, his town, his country

Philosophy is not poetry—or should not be The philosopher, it is true, is always under the temptation to

bring in the poetic to lend attraction to his system. Many have yielded to that temptation; Plato among the earliest, Bergson among the latest. It may, of course, be said that the poet has a deeper insight into things than the philosopher; and perhaps he has, sometimes. But that is no reason why the two provinces should be confused. Poetry may build lofty and inspiring structures from materials brought by the imagination; philosophy cannot build that way. Her materials must be of more solid kind, and observation, science, reasoning, must supply them. As Santayana says: "At heart these finer philosophers, like Plato, are not seeking to describe the world of our daily plodding and commerce, but to supply a visionary interpretation of it, a refuge from it in some contrasted spiritual assurance, where the sharp facts vanish into a clarified drama or a pleasant trance. Far be it from me to deride the imagination, poetic or dialectical; but after all it is a great advantage for a system of philosophy to be substantially true."

So also in relation to science. The impulse which moves the scientist may be, in a sense, poetic; and poetry may find noble themes in the achievements and revelations of science. Nevertheless it is not science.

Separated from philosophy and from science, it is in religion that the poetic comes back to us.

It may be asked—if religion is to be, first diverse, secondly corporate, and thirdly emotional and poetic—in what way it would differ from the orthodox creeds of to-day.

We have given grounds for holding that reason must be brought in to check the claims to revelation; that dogmas held on the strength of ancient authority must

be opened to revision Poetry, with a power of its own, must not seek to usurp the power that belongs to knowledge. Truth is to be put in the first place<sup>1</sup> The saying current in the time of the Renaissance, that a belief may be false in philosophy or science and still be true in theology, is to be frankly discarded As Dr. Inge has written, "the healthy human intellect will never believe that the same proposition may be true for faith and untrue in fact." But if these principles are fully accepted and acted upon, they will involve great changes. ✓

Accounts of the origin of the universe which are quite incredible in the light of present knowledge will no longer be included, as they are now by all the theistic religions, in the authorized presentation of the creeds. The belief in miraculous events, contrary to the order of nature, will be discarded Myth will be recognized as myth, and legend as legend No longer will belief in a localized heaven and hell be made an article of faith. The imagination of man, all through the ages, has peopled space with "intermediate beings", with angels or demons, with the jinn of Islam or all the rank outgrowth of Hindu theology That phantasmagoria will disappear The doctrine of the transmigration of souls has profoundly influenced the civilizations of Asia; the modern mind, in the East as in the West, is bound to recognize that the doctrine rests on nothing better than speculation and assertion. That there is an entity, the individual soul, which finds itself successively in various bodies, animal and human, and proceeds from one to

<sup>1</sup> "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place"—Archbishop Whately

another, upward or downward in a scale of superior or inferior beings, according to its practice of virtue or of vice in each of its successive lives—is inherently improbable, and there is no substantial evidence to lead us to think that any such process does in fact prevail.

The habit of relating some things to Providence and others not—for example, of distinguishing between an escape from an accident and the accident itself, and regarding the one as “ providential ” but not the other—must needs be abandoned, when it is realized that, if anything, then everything is to be ascribed to Providence. Such is the confusion of mind on these matters that, in an opposite spirit, the English law still describes any unfortunate event which cannot be explained, as specially the “ act of God ”; as though anything could be regarded as not being an act of God.<sup>1</sup>

No longer can the doctrine be held, whether implicitly or explicitly, that myths may be represented as fact to simple-minded people for the sake of beneficial results that may be obtained—spiritual comfort, or a strengthening of social bonds, or a sanction for morality in general. It is said, perhaps with good reason, that “ the control of primitive men by delusions was necessary because of their incapacity to understand the real reasons for social order and unity, and to desire these things for their utility ” And it is often assumed that a large part of our present population are still to be classed

<sup>1</sup> At an inquest on the victims of a disaster to a flying-boat the coroner said in the course of his finding: “ It was clear that there was no fuel in the carburettor when the engines failed, but if the stoppage was due to an air-lock in the petrol-feed system the accident was an ‘ act of God ’ ” (*The Times*—March 20th, 1936)

as primitive. Mark, however, the drawbacks and the dangers of connecting religion with delusions. Not only does it alienate altogether men of honesty and intelligence, whose needs also should be catered for, and whose co-operation is at least as valuable as that of the primitive, but in the long run it fails of its purpose; and, when it fails, there follows immense disaster. Sooner or later—and, in these times of wide-spread popular education, sooner rather than later—the myth is revealed for what it is. Then—if the whole structure of life and conduct has been built upon it—with the collapse of the foundation the edifice crumbles. As it crumbles around him, the soul of the simple believer may sink into misery and desolation. And the society, whose system of ethics has been so ill-based, will find itself with no moral habitation in which to live. Look round the world to-day, and see how wide-spread is that danger.

We have assumed provisionally that the creeds are not rigid, that religion may change. Many will say that that is a false assumption—nothing is so fixed as dogma, no one so tenacious as the theologian. Others will say the opposite—that change is proceeding already; that all these contentions are accepted by thoughtful men almost everywhere, that nothing is needed but to let things continue to take their present course. Others, again, see the need of change but are deeply anxious as to the consequence of attempting it, they doubt whether the letter of the creeds can be modified without their spirit being lost.

History does not wholly support the doctrine of unchangeable religions. There has been modification in

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all the faiths, if not in fundamental doctrine, at least in practice and in emphasis "The spirit of the age," to quote Dr. Inge again, "as well as the spirit of Christ, has moulded the various types of Christian piety"; and he points out how one century saw the finest pattern of Christianity in the monk, another in the crusader, a third in the social philanthropist. All religious organizations amend their creeds and formularies, perhaps by imperceptible stages; they select, and they retain or quietly discard; so that the orthodoxy of one period is found not to be the same as that of another. And it is true that at the present time change is proceeding, in some degree, almost everywhere.

In many of the faiths there are definite movements for reform. Within the fold of Christianity there have been successful efforts, during several centuries, to throw off the bonds of Byzantine mediaeval theology; to-day powerful tendencies towards Modernism are evident. Among the Jews of the western countries, Liberal Judaism is a growing influence. In the world of Islam, remarkable changes in religious ideas are taking place, in Turkey, in Egypt and elsewhere. Baháism is a recent and noteworthy effort which seeks to bring eastern belief into line with western knowledge. New forms of Hinduism are being promulgated in India, and of Buddhism in Japan.

These movements have their significance, but it would be an error to attach to them, as yet, a great measure of importance. Taken at their highest, they touch but a small fraction of the hundreds of millions who belong to those faiths. The numbers whom they influence are trivial compared with the multitudes in all lands who are silently drifting into scepticism or indifference



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Clearly, therefore, it is wrong to say that the development of religion, which is so plainly desirable, is impossible, and wrong also to say that it is already being effectively pursued.

That it involves risks is undeniable. Whether institutions so ancient can be refashioned without falling apart in the process must be a matter of doubt and a cause for anxiety. Yet if that risk is not taken, the other risk remains to be faced—that a moving world will leave behind the immobile creeds.

So we see, gradually shaping itself in broad outline, a picture of religion as it may be in the coming age. Where there is uncertainty, and room for different views, there will be diversity of doctrine; and there will be variety of presentation to fit national characteristics and personal needs. Religion will be warm and human, and corporate and poetic; for it is not only a matter of intellectual conviction, it is an attitude of mind, an aptitude, as for music. Not all men and women are strong enough to accept their religious ideas stark.

But truth will be put in the first place. A rational judgement will be applied to every phase. Where facts are established, and there is no room for different views, the creeds must of necessity teach the same things. That is bound to be so with regard to the uniformity of nature and the supremacy of law. If the principle be accepted, also, that everything is to be attributed ultimately to Providence, the effect of that belief will be felt through all the formularies of all the faiths.

A position such as this is subjected to criticism from several sides

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It is said that religion ought to be regarded as transcending the rational, that to give authority to reason degrades it. We have already discussed the relation between intuition, mysticism and reason, and it is unnecessary to reopen that issue. But is there any question of degradation? Many thinkers of deep religious feeling have held the opposite

One or two examples, out of a number that might be given, may be cited from English writers. Benjamin Whichcote, a seventeenth-century divine, summed up the matter well. "I oppose not rational to spiritual", he wrote, "for spiritual is most rational. Where reason speaks, it is the voice of our Guide; a natural voice, we cannot but hear, it is according to the very voice of our nature. It is also true in Religion, to follow God and to follow right Reason, is all one." Bishop Butler, in his *Analogy*, said the same. "I express myself with caution lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." In our own day, Dr Inge has condemned "the notion that faith is fundamentally irrational, and its dogmas exempt from being brought to the bar of ordinary evidence", this, he says, "entrenches superstition."

A second criticism contends that to assert the supremacy of law would lower our conception of God.

It may be answered that this is no more than a survival of the primitive oriental idea of the Deity as King. See God as a monarch—ininitely greater, no doubt, and infinitely more powerful than any human Pharaoh or King of Kings, yet essentially of the same pattern—and then, indeed, He will not seem fully royal unless He is

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sometimes arbitrary. But when the mind has once firmly grasped the conception of the eternal laws that rule all things, immutable through the infinities of space-time; and when Deity is seen behind and in the laws, appearing, not in exceptional "miracles", but in the very existence and process of the cosmos itself—then there is revealed a greatness far more august than any that our forefathers could conceive, even in the noblest flights of their spiritual imagination. Science does not derogate from worship. It may exalt it immeasurably.

Science, it is true, cannot discover, in the general scheme of things, any boundary line between a "natural" and a "super-natural". There is a frontier real and obvious, though shifting, between what we know and what we do not know. If some choose to call the one "natural" and the other "super-natural", that is only the chronic tendency of human beings to treat distinctions which are merely relative to ourselves as though they were something absolute, and no great harm is done. But if an attempt is made to regard one as the sphere of man and the other as the sphere of Deity; and if such a separation is to be taken as an enhancement of the glory of God and of the power of religion—then there is real harm. For the effect must be just the opposite. That would be, in James Martineau's words, "to push all the sanctities into the far spaces we cannot reach". It is only when we discern in nature itself the reign of law, and in the law the hand of God, that we may see a divine splendour in the natural that is about us, and may open an access to what lies beyond.

A third criticism protests against religion being

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brought into the open air, and the crude light of day ; it ought to be something half-lit, mysterious, sheltered. But this is to undervalue its native vigour. Religion need not be so delicate a plant as many of those who tend it have thought. It can flourish in the wind and sun and rain, and grow more sturdy than when it is housed in mysteries. If creeds are too weak to face inquiry and discussion, are they strong enough to control conduct ?

Risks in the future are possible no doubt, but present evils are certain. We have discussed a number of them, made evident by history and plain to everyday observation. A changed attitude in religion may bring the remedies.

No longer will the reluctance to modify dogmas hold back the healthy evolution of morals. No longer will theology be held to justify clericalism, and clericalism hinder social progress. Religion may become, not " opium for the people ", but a tonic. It will no longer be seen as something essentially historical ; moving merely under an impulse from the distant past, but rather as forward-looking, striving towards ideals ; animated by the consciousness that the process of evolution is basic in the universe, and conforming with that process.

Fatalism will yield place to a recognition everywhere of the value of effort. A new dignity will be added to man's status. As has been finely written, " No longer shall men be wondering spectators of a divine task accomplishing in the world, but themselves the accomplishers of it, themselves the hands by which the eternal purpose realizes itself." Under that inspiration, religion, now so generally divorced from daily life,

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may come back into the home and into the State.

Our emotions will no longer be at variance with our intellect when religion seeks truth as earnestly as philosophy does, or science, and is ready, whenever it is found, "to put truth in the first place" Then Kirsopp Lake's confident forecast may come within range of fulfilment. "It is absolutely certain", he wrote, "that the world will once again some day achieve what it has often had and often lost—the closer approximation of knowledge and aspiration—so that its religious system may satisfy the soul of the saint without disgusting the intellect of the scholar"

Not least important, the discordances and antagonisms between the religions themselves will be mitigated. They will be able more freely to draw from each other the best that each can contribute, in example, exposition, inspiration, for the reinforcement of those precepts and purposes which are common to them all. They will emphasize rather the unity of their aim than the diversity of their approach, there will be emulation between them rather than enmity. So they will help to cure the confusion of the age.

We may see the great religions, and all the independent beliefs, standing, as it were, in a circle: some close together, some far apart. Within the circle stands Truth; nearer, perhaps, to one side, farther from another. If they turn their backs on her, and each go in search of some distinctive way, the circle will grow wider and the faiths more separate. But if they face inwards, and try to approach the place where Truth is, they will be drawn nearer together, and should they at last come within reach of her hand, they will find that they are able also to grasp each other's. ✓

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE FACT OF EVIL<sup>1</sup>

WE ask whether we can deduce, in some degree, the nature of God from the experience of man; at once we are faced by the problem which has vexed the heart and the mind of humanity all through the ages—the problem of the existence of evil. It is the ancient question, “Why do good men suffer evil if there is a just Providence?” The good in the world, the virtue in man, argues, it is held, the benevolence of God. Does then the bad in the world, the vice in man, argue malevolence; or, at best, a careless indifference?

The intellect will not be satisfied with the answer that here is a mystery, beyond comprehension, to be accepted with the submission of humble faith. And there are many reflecting people, throughout the world, who are not content with the answer that unmerited suffering in this world will be compensated, and more than compensated by immeasurable happiness, after death, in another. Nor can the question be evaded by denying the fullness, ultimately, of divine responsibility, since nothing is conceivable with which it can be shared.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter, and some passages also of Chapter Three, were included in my Presidential Address for 1933 to the British Institute of Philosophy, published as a booklet, under the title *The Tree of Good and Evil*, by Messrs Peter Davies, Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> Even in the present day, however, a strange Manichaean duality is sometimes preached. For example, Dr Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London, in a sermon on the Great War delivered in 1916, said, “You have no right to blame God, it’s the work of the Devil. God is hindered at every moment by the Devil and all his works; you cannot therefore blame our

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Those sturdy warriors of the spirit, the old Hebrew prophets, were not afraid to face the issue squarely. "Shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"", said Amos "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord, that doeth all these things," said Isaiah And again: "I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy"

Nor can we find refuge in some illusion that evil is non-existent We may pass in imagination across the world, and we shall find everywhere the tale of suffering Here an earthquake has destroyed a town and with it a thousand innocent lives, there a drought and there a flood has brought famine or destruction Here is a man broken by an accident, and here a woman dying of an agonizing disease; and here a child doomed from birth by some inherited defect Everywhere are the victims of inhumanity—those who pay the toll to war, or crime, or sin, or social injustice. When the Stoics said "there is no evil", they were using hyperbole, not expressing a fact They meant—steel yourself against evil, and you may regard it with as much indifference as if it did not exist But it is plainly not true that there is no evil in the world.

We must try to find some other approach.

Assume three conditions First, that there is to be life, and that it is to be conducted on a finite space, like this planet Second, that life is not to be static, created from the beginning in all its fullness, but is to evolve

great and glorious God for the defeat of His design" (Reported in the *Christian World Pulpit*, Feb 16th, 1916)

Third, that the living beings shall be so constituted that they have mind, and some power of choice; within the limits set by their own nature and by their environment, they are to be responsible for their own welfare. Assume that a world of this order exists. Certain consequences must inevitably follow.

The power of choice must involve the possibility of error—that is of the essence of choosing. And error must involve some kind of penalty—for that is of the essence of error. If men, therefore, are to bear the immediate responsibility for their own welfare, they have to choose at every moment between actions that will promote welfare and actions that will injure it. When, for whatever reason, they decide wrongly, either as individuals or as communities, their welfare suffers accordingly. They speak then of evil befalling them. The enjoyment of freedom necessarily involves the possibility of evil.

Consider the fact of death in relation to those conditions. If there is to be birth, there must be death. Unless there were departures, a time would quickly come when there could be no arrivals, since the area of the finite earth would be filled. We can imagine a world in which there was neither birth nor death; but not a world in which there was one without the other. And a world of immortal beings, who were never replaced, could hardly be other than static. Certainly the evolutionary plan, which in fact prevails throughout organic nature, does require that one individual should be superseded by another, one generation by the next. Death itself must therefore be an essential element in such a system. When a death is premature, or violent, or painful, it is clearly among the evils, and it is almost



always an evil from the standpoint of the individual. But if we try to view it in relation to the general scheme of things, we may see that the evil is in the untimeliness, or the violence, or the pain, or it is in the bereavement. Death itself is socially a good. The egoistic instinct leads us to abhor death and to resist it, the social instinct should lead us to accept it, in its due time, without repining.

It is recorded that Xerxes, the King of Persia, who had gathered vast forces at the Hellespont for the invasion of Greece, caused a lofty seat to be set up on a hill from which he could survey them "But when he saw", says Herodotus, "the whole Hellespont hidden by his ships, and all the shores and plains of Abydos thronged with men, Xerxes first declared himself happy, and presently he fell a-weeping . . . 'For', he said, 'I was moved to compassion when I considered the shortness of all human life, seeing that of all this multitude of men not one will be alive a hundred years hence' ". But it would surely have been a truer cause for tears if some fate had condemned them all to immortality; if the King had had reason to foresee that in a hundred years, and a thousand years, and ten thousand years, all those men, and himself with them, would still be cumbering the earth, and that all the new life that would otherwise have replaced them was foredoomed never to be. There is pathos in the things that pass, but in things that never passed there would be despair.

If the people of Xerxes' day had been given immortality, we ourselves should never have come into existence. But why should it be assumed that the change had been effected only in their time? The world would have been filled long before by an immortal race of

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Simian men, or rather, ages earlier, by lower forms of life; probably by the most primitive organisms, which coming first would have occupied the whole planet. It seems a paradox, but it is none the less true, that if we had been made so as to live for ever, we could never have lived at all. We can only count death as an evil if we count a world of amoebae as better than a world of men.

Death, it is plain, is the condition for birth. If some Messenger were to come to mankind with the offer that death should be overthrown, but with the one inseparable condition, that birth also should cease; if the existing generation were given the chance to live for ever, but on the clear understanding that never again would there be a child, or a youth or girl, or adolescent love, never again new persons with new hopes, new ideas, new achievements; ourselves for always and never any others—and if the answer to that Messenger were to be given by the light of dispassionate reason, could there be a doubt what it would be?

Among physical evils, pain is usually accounted the chief. Here again, if human beings were immortal, and were immune from injury no matter what they did—no matter how they might bring their bodies into collision and conflict with the material world around them, no matter how they might choose to feed them—then they could dispense with pain. But since that is impossible, pain is a necessity. Its marvellous apparatus of sensory nerves and swift mental reactions is not an infliction, but a precious endowment. It gives warning against injury or disease that might lead to mutilation or death.

Turn for a moment from human conditions to those

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of the animal world It is commonly held that a ruthlessness of mutual slaughter prevails there, chronic and universal, which heavily weights the balance in the general scheme of things on the side of evil But examine the facts a little more closely.

We must be on our guard against applying the standards of our own nature to a sphere they may not fit. We know little either of the satisfactions or of the sensibilities of other creatures. In the relations between individuals of one species and another, it seems that the emotions of sympathy and pity are usually absent, but it may be that the sensitiveness to pain, and the emotions of alarm, terror and despair are of quite a different order from what they are among ourselves. Especially does this seem likely among the insects, where mutual conflict appears to reach the greatest pitch of ruthlessness Consider, for example, this instance given by Professor Wheeler, one of the leading authorities on the social insects "While an ant", he tells us, "is feeding on nectar or syrup her abdomen may be snipped off with a pair of scissors, without interrupting her repast" We are observing a different world.

It is of interest to recall the conclusions reached by two thinkers, of great eminence, who had devoted themselves to intimate study of animal life, and whose own characters were marked by a humane kindness. Alfred Russel Wallace wrote "Now that the war of nature is better known, it has been dwelt upon by many writers as presenting so vast an amount of cruelty and pain as to be revolting to our instincts of humanity Now there is, I think, good reason to believe that all this is greatly exaggerated, that the supposed 'tor-

ments ' and ' miseries ' of animals have little real existence, but are the reflection of the imagined sensations of cultivated man and woman in similar circumstances ; and that the amount of actual suffering caused by the struggle for existence among animals is altogether insignificant . . . On the whole, then, we conclude that the popular idea of the struggle for existence entailing misery and pain on the animal world is the very reverse of the truth. What it really brings about is the maximum of life and of the enjoyment of life with the minimum of suffering and pain. Given the necessity of death and reproduction—and without these there could have been no progressive development of the organic world—and it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured." Charles Darwin took the same view. " When we reflect on this struggle," he said, " we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy and the happy survive and multiply."

But when these things have been said, not all has been said. Other facts remain, obvious and inescapable, affecting the whole range of human life ; facts of unnecessary deaths, of excessive and apparently gratuitous pain, of innumerable cases of physical and moral suffering undeserved by the sufferers.

On this there are three main considerations which may be called to mind.

The first is that, if man has to bear the disadvantages that belong to a world that is not static but evolving, he can also gain the advantages. The world is a process. Evil conditions, like all else, are to be regarded, not only

as what they are, but also in relation to what they may be becoming. The stream of events carries them along with the rest, out of the past into the future, they may be changed or stopped as they pass.

The animals have to await, unconsciously, their adaptation to their environment, in the course of an evolution spread over numberless generations. Civilized man may, in some measure at least, consciously adapt the environment itself to his own needs. In doing that, he diminishes evil.

For the people of ancient Egypt, for example, there was no greater calamity than the failure of the Nile flood. It caused distress throughout the land; repeated a second year and it brought destitution; a third year—famine and death. Hardly less disastrous was an excessive rise of the river, the inundation would sweep through the country drowning and destroying. And nothing could have seemed to those people more absolutely beyond the control of man than those hostile phases of the formidable river. Here, if anywhere, was the work of the unseen Powers, or of destiny, or of chance; to be averted, if at all, by prayer and sacrifice, or perhaps by virtuous conduct, if not averted, to be accepted, with resignation and fortitude, as a clear example of the inevitable evils which mysteriously, and regardless of justice, afflict mankind. Yet now these very evils have in fact been struck out from the long catalogue of human woes. The ancients built temples to propitiate the mythical gods of the Nile; the moderns build dams to regulate its flow. The Government of Egypt has brought into being great lakes as reservoirs, hundreds of miles of canals, thousands of sluices, an expert direction supervises the irrigation, and the

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peasant, cultivating his land, can feel secure that the water will come, not too little and not too much.

Pestilences used to sweep over whole continents—the Black Death, the plague, cholera. The disease entered town after town, house after house, bringing everywhere suffering, mental agony, bitter bereavement. Those were patent evils. They too were thought to be inevitable—the acts of God. Yet they are past. There is no more Black Death; epidemics of plague and cholera are rare, and are stopped at the start. Preventive and curative medicine in its triumphant march, generation after generation, is striking disease after disease from the list of evils.

Sometimes the pessimist has hardly completed his indictment when the grievances he quotes to support it have gone. Schopenhauer set out to prove that evil dominated the world. He instanced those who “bear misery, need and death, without measure and without object, in the form, for instance, of millions of negro slaves, or of the three million weavers in Europe, who, in hunger and care, lead a miserable existence in damp rooms or the cheerless halls of a factory.” Within twenty years from the time he wrote, American slavery was abolished; within fifty years, the conditions of the textile workers in Europe, though still far from satisfactory, had been improved out of recognition.

If men were wrecked in storms at sea, they learnt to construct ships so large, and with motive force so powerful, that they could outride the storms, they invented compasses and sextants, developed the science of navigation, put lights around their coasts. If their dwellings were struck by lightning or overthrown by

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earthquakes, they learnt to divert the lightning, and even to erect buildings that would often withstand earthquake. If they starved on a niggardly soil, they migrated by millions to more fertile countries. If aggregation in great cities brought new ailments and diseases, they found ways to avoid polluting the soil on which they lived, the water they drank, the air they breathed. Anodynes were devised to mitigate pain. The social evils that sprang from the oppression and corruption of governments were lessened by the advent of democracy. It would be useful if someone could invent a system of negative statistics which would count the evils that do *not* occur !

Some calamities, indeed, arising from the physical conditions of the globe we inhabit, must be reckoned as inevitable. On June 30th, 1908, a great meteor fell in the Yenisei district of Siberia, blasting out a number of great craters, and destroying by fire a thousand square miles of primeval forest. In some earlier age a meteor struck a hole nearly a mile wide in what is now the desert of Arizona. If ever some fearful catastrophe were to result from such a cause—although the chances against it are immense—it would obviously have to be counted as an inevitable evil. We have constant experience that people are killed unavoidably by hurricanes and by lightning, and that towns, which have been built neither of steel and concrete on the one hand, nor of bamboo and paper on the other, are overthrown by earthquakes. But although there are categories of physical evils which are difficult or impossible to escape, these are exceptions. In the main, viewing things as ever in the process of change, we see that many ills of yesterday are gone to-day, and this gives us the right to

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believe that many of the ills of to-day may be gone to-morrow.

The second point to be called to mind is that the issue is not one in which the individual finds himself, alone and unaided, face to face with the conditions of life, an unequal battle between the man and circumstance. In between is the social unit.

Each of us is a member of social organizations of various forms—the family, the city, the State, all kinds of associations of interests, parties, creeds, nations. We have the advantages of membership, and we have the disadvantages. Each man gains by the achievements of others, in previous generations and in his own generation; and he suffers from the faults and errors of others, in the past or in the present.

If any evil that happens to us is traced back to its causes, it will be found that—apart from natural catastrophes—it is due, immediately or ultimately, to the fault or error of some person or body of persons. It may be ourself, or it may be another person, or many others; through acts of commission or of omission; at the time or earlier. The evil is not an arbitrary blow from the hand of some fictional "Fate", of some "Necessity" formless and mindless, before which effort is futile and hope is vain. It is the consequence of the action—or frequently the inaction—of human beings.

Since man is a social animal, his acts are usually co-operative. When a group or society does rightly, all the members may gain; when it does wrongly, and therefore suffers a penalty, each member may share in the suffering. One country takes precautions against epidemic diseases, and all its citizens benefit by the



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immunity; another does not, and any one of its citizens may be stricken and die. If, in such a case, we take the individual as the unit, there is injustice; but if we take the society as the unit, there is not.

The scheme of things is based on human solidarity. Corporate activity, rightly directed, by every social entity from the single family up to the comity of nations, is necessary to welfare. The evils that a man suffers may be due either to his own failure or to a corporate failure. The suffering is the means by which men are impelled to avoid failures, whether caused by individual error or by corporate error.

Here again the position must be seen, not as static, but as changeable and changing. The social environment can be modified, like the physical environment, and far more easily. Ignorance, vice, crime, disease, war, may yield to the forces of advancing civilizations, and, as they diminish, "the evils from which good men suffer" will diminish also.

The third consideration is the need of maintaining a proper sense of proportion. We have to strike a balance; and we must do it fairly, objectively, not overweighting, because of our own temperament or mood, either side of the scales.

We are sometimes tempted to believe that the troubles of life bulk in the same proportion as the attention that we give to them. Columns of our newspapers are filled with accounts of disasters, crimes, riots, wars; and it often seems as though the whole world were in a chronic state of calamity and turmoil. The impression is largely due to the fact that nowadays every incident is reported instantly, from every quarter of the globe, by methods

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unknown to previous generations. The presentation by a quicker and wider news-service suggests a more chaotic world. It is right, indeed, that attention should be specially directed to crimes and disasters. The news-services are the sensory nerves of society. Warning is given that may prevent repetition, and allow opportunity to provide a remedy. But this is no reason for thinking that the bad constitutes the whole, or even a substantial part of it.

The workhouse, the prison, the asylum, the hospital for incurables, are facts, they come into the reckoning; but they are not the town. So also in surveying the records of history. We look back over the long level stretches of the past, and we see the striking events standing up like woods or hillocks—the wars, the religious and political conflicts, the plots and the persecutions, the plagues and the earthquakes—and in the retrospect it seems as though they filled the whole country. But we know that, inconspicuous, between the woods and the hillocks, are the fields and the villages, where generations of men and women have carried on peacefully their daily avocations.

The modern mind—determined to put truth in the first place; profoundly influenced by the experience of the Great War, filled with anxiety as it sees the forces gathering which may bring about a repetition; sensitive to the wretched social conditions that blight the lives of a great part of the world's population—will not consent to be soothed by illusions. It is angered rather than comforted, by “robust optimism” of the nineteenth-century kind—

God's in His Heaven—  
All's right with the world

It has learnt, too, that the great discovery of nineteenth-century science does not, as was thought, bring reassurance; evolution does not guarantee progress. There is no automatic force in the nature of things which will carry us forward irrespective of our own efforts. Biology finds too many examples of the deterioration and the extinction of species, and human history too many examples of the decline and the disappearance of civilizations, to allow us to rest in the simple faith that the discovery of the principle of evolution disposes of the problem of evil.

In reaction, a wave of pessimism is evident in present-day thought. Life is seen by many as something to be put up with; to be endured without zest; to be accepted with resignation because we can do no other. Yet this also is an unfair tilting of the balance.

When we try to view the cosmic process as a whole; when we envisage the birth of the worlds, the coming of man, the growth of civilization; when we take account of the value of human freedom, and when we look round and see the achievements of science and art, and the profusion of simple things that make people happy—it seems blind folly to contend that the evil in the world outweighs the good. If we can tune our ears to catch the authentic chant of nature, we shall hear a music swelling from her innumerable voices which is not a dirge but a paean, a song of life abounding and triumphant. And if in our world there are vales of tears, there are hillsides also of joy and laughter, and peaks of splendour shining in the sun.

The conclusion cannot be pessimist. Nor can it be optimist, if by optimism is meant a denial of the reality and the prevalence of evil, or a belief that it will be cured.

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of itself. Rather should it be “meliorist”, to use George Eliot’s term—a conviction that the present is on the whole better than the past, and that the future may be better still, but that effort is needed to make it so.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### RIGHT AND WRONG<sup>1</sup>

OUR times are lacking in agreed standards of right and wrong. People were accustomed to look to the religion into which they were born to furnish them. But now the adherents of each religion are more fully aware of the existence of other religions, proclaiming sometimes different standards. The authority of all of them is questioned. Revelation, intuition, conscience—no claim can be accepted uncritically. Dogmas and precepts must all be submitted to the rational judgement. Where shall reason itself find a criterion?

We expect philosophy to provide it. But it must be confessed that philosophy gives little help. For a long time the Idealist school dominated philosophic thought. Platonists and Neo-Platonists, Kantians and Hegelians, set out to find the Idea of Virtue, the Absolute Good, the Categorical Imperative, the Ultimate Values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. From these guidance was to be drawn for the life of man. After two thousand years of search along that line, no system has been found which commands general acceptance. There is indeed no school of philosophy of any kind to which we can point and say—here is the teaching which gives to mankind the rational basis for practical morals.

Thinkers of the eighteenth century propounded a

<sup>1</sup> This and the next chapter cover parts of the same ground as my book *Practical Ethics*, published in the Home University Library by Messrs Thornton Butterworth in 1935. The substance of some of the paragraphs included here has also been included there.

doctrine of Natural Rights It was asserted that each man came into the world endowed with certain rights in relation to society. They were fundamental; all laws and customs must conform to them; by them could be determined the standards of right and wrong The theory of Natural Rights had a profound influence upon the politics of the time The American Declaration of Independence stated in its Preamble "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" Thirteen years later the French National Assembly declared, "The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man, and these rights are liberty, property, security and resistance of oppression" A truth, however, is not "self-evident" unless it is such that no sane man will deny it These principles have constantly been denied At the very time, indeed, that the Declaration of Independence proclaimed the inalienable right of all men to liberty, negro slavery was a legalized institution in the United States, and it remained so for nearly a century afterwards In many parts of Europe in our own day the claim to liberty has been challenged by philosophers and rejected by dictators. The "natural and imprescriptible right of property" is repudiated by a hundred and seventy millions of people in Russia Assertion is not enough. It is not enough to proclaim that this or that is "self-evident" If someone says that, for him, it is not self-evident, what then?

Thinkers of the nineteenth-century believed that a firm basis for ethics was to be found in the principle of

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Evolution Nature had decreed a struggle for existence as the means to the survival of the fittest, and so to the progress of the species. Harsh, even cruel, in its working, the process was ultimately beneficent. Here, then, was the test of right and wrong. Whoever conformed to nature's decree was doing right; whoever tried to impede it was doing wrong, as well as attempting the impossible. This process, pervading the life of sea, swamp and jungle, must apply also to human societies. It was held to justify an unrestrained economic competition between individuals, a conscienceless bargaining between interests, a ruthless struggle between States. Industrial oppression was part of the natural order of things, and war the ordained instrument of the progress of mankind.

Closer thinking soon showed that all this was fallacious. The very term "Law of evolution" was seen to be misleading. It is unfortunate, and the source of much confusion, that the word "Law" is used in two quite different senses, one in science, the other in ordinary affairs. "The Laws of Motion", for example, or "the Law of Evolution", are not commands; they are simply names for processes, for sequences of events. They have nothing in common with a moral law, such as "Thou shalt not steal", or with the laws enacted by legislatures and enforced by penalties. There are no "commands" issued by "Nature", for "Nature" has no personality—is indeed nothing more than a useful figure of speech. If we will, we may imitate the methods of the sea, the swamp and the jungle, or we may find better methods, if we can; and there is no cosmic legislation to enforce the one or to forbid the other.

Further, as Huxley pointed out, "survival of the

“fittest” does not mean survival of the best. It means no more than “the survival of those best fitted to cope with their circumstances.” It often leads to degeneration and not to the development of higher types. Evolution in nature, then, furnishes for man no moral standards of any kind. The attempt to find them there failed, having worked much mischief in the meantime.

There is yet another possible basis for an ethical code, seldom advocated nowadays, but accepted in earlier times almost universally—the custom of the community. “Originally,” says Bergson, “custom is the whole of morality, and as religion forbids departure from custom, morality is co-extensive with religion.” The idea is enshrined, for example, in the ancient Hindu laws of Manu: “the custom handed down in regular succession since time immemorial is called the conduct of virtuous men.” But this involves the conclusion that whatever are the laws and customs of a particular society at a particular time must be accepted in perpetuity. It would compel us to believe that “cannibalism is moral in a cannibal country.” Ethics becomes a stereotyped code, and no generation may ever seek a better standard of conduct than its predecessor. We need hardly stay to examine more closely that creed. Civilization emerges from barbarism precisely through the discovery that the right is not identical with the customary. ✓

After so many negatives where shall we find our positive? If neither theology, nor intuition, nor natural rights, nor the principle of evolution, nor established custom can give us the test that we need, where shall we find it? Is there no answer to the challenge of the sceptic—After all, what is Right and Wrong?



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While the idealist philosophers have been striving to find some *a priori* principle of ethics, the ordinary people of the world, who have to live, and to live in communities, have been silently developing, all through the ages, their own systems of practical morals. While philosophers have been trying, as it were, to construct the roof first and then hang the house from it, the people have been building, brick by brick, from the foundations up. And the house stands. The philosophy for which we are searching is there all the time—is in practice all around us; only we do not recognize it as a philosophy because it is not dignified by the name. It uses no technical terms; but in effect it abandons the *a priori* and proceeds *a posteriori*. It adopts the simple rule that right is that which leads to good results and wrong that which leads to bad results.

Ideas, principles, laws, customs, actions, are to be judged by their consequences. They are to be accounted right if they will conduce to welfare, and wrong if they will not.

At once the question presents itself—What is meant by “welfare”? To this no short answer can be given. Welfare cannot be defined in a single phrase. It is the collective name for a great number of different things, each one of which is beneficial.

We see in the world about us what, in general, these things are. Some arise out of our physical characters. Health rather than sickness; a meal when one is hungry, a rest when one is tired, a shelter from the weather—that these are “goods” is indeed self-evident, for this at least no sane man would deny. There are satisfactions derived from sympathy and love and the fulfilment of duty. There are the gifts of art

and science, and all the achievements of a high civilization. There are pleasures, innocuous in themselves, that gratify the mind or the body. " ' Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale ? ' — ' Yes, by Saint Anne; and ginger shall be hot i' the mouth, too ' ' "

It is not possible to bring all these into a single definition of welfare, or of " the Good " . Any definition wide enough to be complete would be too vague to be useful.

What guidance, then, is given by this principle when we are trying to decide whether any particular thing is good or not ? Apart from the obvious physical cases of health and the like, how are we to evaluate " goods " ? What kind of civilization is to be considered " high " ?

The answer here must be that, in this as in all else, intuition and reason must combine to guide us. Experience is the chief test. Discussion, experiment and example are the means to a conclusion. In some matters, indeed, it makes no great difference what the choice is. A preference for one flavour or one odour rather than for another, for one kind of music or for one kind of scenery—these raise no ethical questions, and individual taste is the arbiter. But where different results do follow from the choice, then the test is to be found in the probable consequences. The conclusions reached, in each case or group of cases, by individual judgements, and ultimately by the common sense of mankind, set the standards of good and bad, establish the rules of right and wrong. If fuller experience shows that a conclusion was mistaken, or if new conditions render it no longer sound, then, by the same process it may be changed. Thus, over long periods of time,

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sometimes by slow imperceptible changes, sometimes suddenly and after vehement controversies, the customs of society have been evolved and our ways of living established

Countless are the issues which have had to be solved, or are now being solved, in the age-long and world-wide process of history. Human sacrifice, tribal raids, slavery—are these good or bad? Is toleration in religion a right policy? Is the duel the right way to settle disputes? Is war on the whole a good thing or a bad thing? These are examples. And on the narrower scale of individual conduct, every day and everywhere we have to choose whether this object or that is good; if both are good, which is the better; if both are bad, which is the lesser evil. We are always asking ourselves what are likely to be the results, direct and indirect, of our choice, whether they will make for welfare or against it.

Does this mean that each person on every occasion has to consider afresh all the possible consequences of the action he may be taking? If so, the result must be moral chaos; the task would be far beyond the powers of the deepest and quickest thinker, much more of average men and women. And does it mean that such general conceptions as virtue, duty, good character, are to be dropped? That would be the negation of morality.

Neither of these follows. Consider what has in fact happened. In course of centuries this thing and that, this action and that, have been found by experience to be “good”. The human intelligence has grouped the particular goods together. This class of things or of actions is good, that class is bad. There come into

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being general rules of conduct Social customs develop They are formulated, fortified, expanded, by religious creeds and legal codes. Sometimes a prophet, a seer or a poet will sum up in a flash the diffused, and perhaps unrealized, experience of generations, his insight is recognized, his teaching accepted, his authority afterwards points the way. Or the lessons of the past may be crystallized in a proverb, which becomes the popular guide in current cases. In ways such as these, certain qualities come to be ranked as good and to count as virtues—truthfulness, honesty, courage and the rest; their opposites bad, and as vices. Individual habits are formed—good habits or bad habits The normal person, in the ordinary conditions of daily life, does not ponder at every moment what is right and what is wrong; he usually acts by habit and as a matter of course. Custom in the community corresponds to habit in the individual.

The conclusion to be drawn—important to our present discussion—is this. When doubtful issues arise; or when there is reason to think that a habit or a custom, an article in a creed or a law in a code, is bad and ought to be changed—we are not obliged to seek a criterion in some Absolute Good, or Categorical Imperative It is futile to turn to any such mystical or transcendental conceptions. They are no more than “fictional abstractions”. They possess no intrinsic authority; they may all be challenged and defied But we may go back to facts We may appeal to the evidence of actual experience; and on that basis we may make, where necessary, a fresh valuation of consequences <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Utilitarian School of philosophy started from the same standpoint They held that “ethical precepts must be judged in

The problem is often put whether, in morals, it is the rightness of an action that matters, or the rightness of the motive. If a person, with the best of intentions, does something which proves to be injurious, was his action good or bad? And conversely, where a person, animated by a corrupt motive, takes a course which turns out to be beneficial, was he acting rightly or wrongly? But to put the problem in that way is to confuse the issue. There are two questions to be answered and not one. One issue is—was the man's motive good? The other is—was the course he chose the right one? The answer may well be in the affirmative in one case and in the negative in the other. The right motive is one good thing and the right action is another good thing.

This discussion may seem at first sight abstract, and remote from our main theme. We are, however, in search of a way out from the intellectual anarchy of our time. We are complaining that there is no agreed basis for moral standards. We have found that those offered by the several religions must be tested by the rational judgement. We cannot discover in the idealist philo-

the light of the consequences which result from the practice of them." But, seeking precision, they adopted certain secondary principles which have been judged to be unsound. They held that the consequences are to be valued by their "utility", that utility is a question of "happiness", and happiness is to be measured by "pleasure" and "pain". In politics they drew from these premisses a theory of extreme individualism, which, when put into practice, was found to cause harm. The criticism to which Utilitarianism has been subjected is regarded almost universally as conclusive. But it does not touch the primary principle from which Bentham and his brilliant school had started. We may set out again from the same point, while following afterwards a different course.

sophies any criterion by which that judgement can be applied. If, then, we are challenged to say what other criterion there is, we are bound to give an answer, and to defend our answer against criticism

We see that mankind long ago has found empirically the principle on which codes of conduct can be based actions are right or wrong according to their effects upon welfare, welfare is not one thing, but is compounded of many This principle, of course, is not itself a code of conduct Nor can it produce a code by any short or easy process Bentham believed that, where a choice was to be made between two courses, the pleasures and the pains that would follow from each could be estimated, and be divided, so to speak, into lots, these could be multiplied by the number of people concerned; the totals balanced against each other; and the result of the sum would tell which of the two courses was the better. But the matter is not so simple as this In ethics there is no calculating machine which, by the turning of a handle, will give the answer to our problems

Through all the centuries of human history, and most actively in our own times, an immense process of private judgement and public discussion has been at work. Out of it have emerged the rules of right and wrong, for all the varied activities of life, which we have inherited from the generations that have gone before us Through that same process we confirm, or in our turn we mould and modify, those rules before handing them on to our successors. Throughout that process immediate advantages have to be weighed against later advantages; benefits to the individual balanced against benefits to the society; the good of a nation considered

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in relation to the good of mankind. Experiment, publicity, education, persuasion, legislation, are the instruments. Theologians and philosophers, statesmen and poets have helped on the process. But not seldom they have confused and hindered it; through proclaiming general principles which prove to be unsound, or drawing from sound principles false deductions

This vast process is not a science. There are no fixed laws that it can follow. It allows no clear predictions. The factors are too many, too varied, too changing to permit it to become a science; although parts of it—in ethics, politics, economics, eugenics—may be handled in a scientific spirit. Viewed as a whole the process is an art. It is in fact the art of living.

## CHAPTER NINE

### WHY ACT RIGHTLY ?

WHEN it was generally accepted throughout the western world that every personality, lived on after death, and would pass innumerable years in torment if the earthly life had been bad or in bliss if it had been good, men had an effective inducement to resist temptations and to act well. Most of the religions also of the East offered systems of penalties and rewards more or less similar. Here, then, was the sanction for morality. Granted that there was a right and a wrong, here was the motive for doing the one and avoiding the other. But now that these beliefs are held with less certainty, now that Heaven and Hell have lost their vividness, where are we to find sufficient reasons why ordinary men and women, day by day, should do the things they ought to do when other things are pleasanter ? To discover in what the right consists, and to declare it, is not enough. The modern world needs to understand, clearly and definitely, what reason there is, when the right course is known, why people should take it, rather than follow their own desires, which may be opposite. If the theological reason is doubted or denied, does there remain any reason at all ?

Here again we shall be well-advised not to look for some *a priori* theory. We shall succeed better if we try to learn from life as it is lived. If we can discern what the motives are that do actually influence those men whose lives are recognized to be good, that which we are seeking will stand revealed.



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And here again—as so often—we shall find, as soon as we examine the facts, that not one force only is at work. While thinkers have been trying to discover some single principle of righteousness, in practice mankind is led to right living, so far as it does live rightly, not by one motive but by many.

This man is honest in his business. Why is he honest?

It may be that he values honesty for its own sake. His inherited instincts, his upbringing, perhaps his religious beliefs, make him an honest man. He would be ashamed ever to do an act that was dishonest. Without needing to consider any other reason, he is honest by principle and that is enough.

Or it may be that that estimate of his character would be mistaken. In reality he may belong to that large class of people who are honest because they believe that it pays. He may be used to remind himself, whenever temptation offers, that “honesty is the best policy.” He thinks his business will prosper best if his reputation is good. He will gain respect among his family and friends, and position among his neighbours, and he will take satisfaction in that. Possibly his religious faith leads him to believe that honesty will be rewarded, and dishonesty punished, by some supernatural power and in some mysterious way, either in this world, or in another world, or in both.

We may, however, again be mistaken, and, if we could see into the man’s heart, we should find that, as a matter of fact, he is little influenced by any of these things, but is moved by a wholesome fear of the criminal law. He refrains from dishonesty because he is afraid of being detected and convicted, punished and ruined.

Everyone knows that such motives do in fact influence human conduct. Some are worthy motives and some unworthy; some will have more influence with one man and some with another. Sometimes one among them predominates and will decide the course that is taken; sometimes there will be a combination of various motives, and sometimes a conflict, different forces pulling different ways, and the stronger deciding.

When we are asked what, in these days, is to be the sanction for morality, the answer, then, must be that there may be various sanctions and not only one. Society will shape its measures accordingly.

It has been said that "every new generation is a fresh invasion of savages" In a civilized country, society takes hold of the young and trains them to civilized ways.<sup>1</sup> They are subjected to all kinds of influences, from the day of birth, through infancy, childhood and adolescence, on into maturity. They are influenced by the family and the school, the church and the State, the press and the stage—by the whole atmosphere around them. Innate qualities, brought by inheritance, are moulded by the society; those held to be good can be fostered, those bad discouraged. Character is formed, and character determines action.

The primary instincts that each individual brings with him are twofold, one set of instincts seeks his own preservation and welfare; the other takes satisfaction in the welfare of others. We call them egoism and altruism, self-interest and sympathy.<sup>2</sup> Such instincts

<sup>1</sup> "Homines enim civiles non nascuntur, sed fiunt"—For civic men are not born but made—Spinoza

<sup>2</sup> Using the word "sympathy" in its primary meaning, of "feeling together", or "fellow-feeling".

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are innate, not alone in human nature, but in animal nature generally. Egoism is obvious throughout the animate world. Altruism is seen most clearly in the care of parents for their offspring. Animals that are usually timid will face danger to protect their young. Birds build nests; and it is difficult to find any instinct of an egoistic kind that would lead them to do so. Gregarious animals or social insects help each other in various ways. In man the instinct of sociality is carried to the highest point. Reason here confirms instinct, it realizes the value of sympathy between individuals, and of the institutions and customs that spring from it. A system of morals, if it is to be strong, will enlist in its support, not one only, but both of these sets of primary instincts—the egoistic as well as the altruistic.

It has often been held, however, that morality is a question purely of altruism.<sup>1</sup> A man's goodness is to be judged entirely by his readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of others. To seek his own interest, or his own pleasure, is held to be either immoral or apart from morality. Society, when it sets out to civilize each new generation in turn, is expected to use all the various influences at its command—and particularly those of religion—to suppress self-interest and to fortify self-sacrifice. "La morale, c'est faire les choses ennuyeuses."

Examine this view more closely, and it will be seen to be unsound. True that the teachers of all faiths and

<sup>1</sup> In the following passages, for example

Kant—*The Metaphysic of Ethics*, Book I, Chap. 1, pp. 8, 18.

L. T. Hobhouse—*Morals in Evolution*, p. 14.

E. Westermarck—*The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. II, p. 154.

W. Lippmann—*A Preface to Morals*, p. 221.

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the moralists of all schools have continually laid their emphasis on the duties to others. And it is right that they should do this; for men's innate tendency to seek what their own immediate interest demands is potent, and no persuasion is necessary. It is the altruistic side that needs outside support. But it does not follow that self-interest also may not be, in some forms and in some measure, a moral motive.

We are accustomed to say "a man has duties to himself" If someone perversely neglects his own health, or is careless about his own livelihood, we blame him for failing in his primary duties. Spinoza reminds us that we cannot wish to act well and to live well without, at the same time, wishing to act and to live; that "no virtue can be conceived prior to this, the endeavour after self-preservation"

Many self-interested acts, of course, are anti-social, but many are not. Some, indeed, are indispensable to the social good. By seeking his own health, education, efficiency, by realizing the capacities of his own personality—physical, mental and spiritual, the individual serves the community also. The better the units, the better the mass. Posterity also is served. The better the people of this century, the finer will be the heritage of the next.

Further, it is irrational to hold that my duty is to be found in seeking only my neighbour's welfare, and never my own. If that rule were right, it would apply equally to my neighbour; he would have as his own duty the promotion of my welfare. But why should that be his duty unless my welfare is a good thing in itself? And if it is, have not I, too, an obligation to promote it?

This aspect, however, is not often recognized. Morality and regard for one's own interest are commonly looked upon as opposites. Christian theologians and preachers, for the reason already stated, have laid stress on the "other-regarding virtues". Religion in general has come to be looked upon as requiring pure self-sacrifice.

Here we may find an additional cause of the loosening hold of religion, and of the perplexity of our times that has followed. For the modern mind, looking at the whole matter afresh, without feeling bound by traditional orthodoxies, sees that morality, if it is to be comprehensive, must allow that egoism, at proper times and in proper measure, is a right motive, that it is indeed essential to welfare. When religion seems to ignore or to contradict this, common sense and religion stand opposed.

There is, however, a misunderstanding here. Religious doctrine rarely makes that requirement. The Golden Rule is usually accepted as the highest of the ethical precepts of the religions of the western world, and it clearly does not support that view. It does not prescribe that a man should take no care for his own interests and his own welfare. The Old Testament says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; and the New Testament, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them". They do not say, Thou shalt care for thy neighbour and not for thyself. On the contrary, care for oneself, and the treatment one would wish for oneself from others, is taken as the very standard of one's duty to them. Egoism in fact is made the measure for altruism.

None the less, in practice religion does concentrate

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upon self-sacrifice, and the established systems of morals are inclined to pass by the claims of personality. This has now led to a powerful reaction. An emancipated age asks the reasons for these repressions and renunciations. Receiving often no answer, except a reference to ancient texts or inherited customs, it is ready to assume that there are no valid reasons.

A Nietzsche arises; propounds a system "Beyond Good and Evil"; makes direct war on all traditional morality, wins enthusiastic supporters, and sets flowing a powerful current in the thought of the time. A great political movement, inspired largely by ideas such as his, conquers Germany and spreads beyond. We see a vehement revolt against the creed of abnegation, of self-suppression. The discoveries of modern psychology appear to support the movement from the side of science. Action comes to be glorified for the sake of action, and regardless whether it brings welfare or not. No matter whether life is lived well or badly; the important thing is that it should be lived strenuously. The ideal man is seen, not in the saint, but in the warrior-hero, and the ideal life in "the merry days of battle". "Man", said Nietzsche, "shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior, all else is folly". So each new generation is to be taught, not to overcome, but to cherish and cultivate, whatever innate savagery it brings.

The element of truth that underlies this movement—its rejection of the doctrine that the good life consists simply in self-renunciation regardless of self-realization—is overlaid by its own opposite mistake. Rightly asserting that altruism without egoism is a false morality, the impetus of its reaction has led it to over-shoot the mark, and to plunge into the error, far more dangerous,

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that the contrary must be true. Egoism is now exalted, and altruism suppressed. Justice, Mercy, Kindness and Peace are no longer to be regarded as good words; Struggle, Ruthlessness and Victory are to be the good words. Self-sacrifice is still to be a virtue, but only when it is for the sake of the State or the nation, which shall itself merely embody and apply the massed self-assertions of all its citizens.

The hero, to be a hero, must have an enemy. How else can he prove his heroism? How shall Siegfried display his fearlessness if he has no dragon? Of what use would be the mystic sword, that has been forged and tempered with so much travail? If no enemy is at hand, it is essential to create one. So the spirit of violence and hatred is let loose in the world, launched with eloquent appeals to noble emotions, and justified by a new philosophy of one-sided ethics.

It should be obvious enough that altruism, in its proper measure, is essential too. The individual cannot exist apart from the social unit, his good cannot be found apart from its well-being. The social units begin with the family, the neighbourhood and the town, with the trade or profession, they enlarge to the nation, and then to the comity of all the nations. The man depends, in one way or another, upon all of these. They nurture him, guard his health, feed his intellect; they supply him with opportunity for livelihood; they preserve his safety and his peace. Not one of these social units, from the family to mankind, can fulfil its purpose, or even exist, unless its members are ready to accommodate themselves to one another, to subordinate, when necessary, personal or sectional interest to the general interest. A philosophy which ignores or depre-

ciates altruism must be a false philosophy. The truth is plain to see. both egoism and altruism are necessary to welfare. Both, therefore, are moral motives. Right living is the right balance between them.

We are constantly called upon to do things which are not to our own interest, and for which sympathy, love, duty—altruism in some form—is the only motive. Many thinkers, it is true, from Plato onwards, have set out to show that all motives can be resolved into one—the egoistic; that “in the long run” or “rightly understood”, the individual is really serving his own “enlightened self-interest” when he makes sacrifices for the public good. There has always been “a philosophic craving for unity”, for the sake of a unified theory, philosophers will sometimes not hesitate to do violence to facts. To say that a man who, in a shipwreck, gives up his place in a boat to a woman, or a martyr who goes to the stake rather than recant his faith—to say that these are really acting out of regard for their own interest, from a motive which is at bottom egoistic—is to use language that offends common sense. In the ordinary conditions of everyday life, lesser occasions continually arise where personal interest has to be sacrificed. Life is lived in the short run, as well as in the long run, and not by “the individual”—some generalized abstraction whose good may be seen to be ultimately identified with that of “the society”; but by actual men and women, side by side with others like themselves. Constantly they are called upon to do things for which they can expect no return in this world, and, as many think, no sure return in another.

We come back to our question, why then should they



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do such things at all? And we may return to our exemplar—the honest man.

At his best, he acts rightly because he has a good will. He is well-disposed and single-hearted. It may be that he is so intuitively, with him this is innate. He is well-bred—in the true sense of that term; good-breeding being a matter, not of class, but of quality. Such tendencies, if they are innate, may be fortified and developed by training, or, if they are lacking, may in some measure be instilled. Here comes in the function of society. If an element of self-sacrifice is essential, and if the best motive for it is to be found in the good will, society will ask itself how it can most effectively promote that good will. Hence arise all the problems of the training of character, in the school and in the home.

At this point we find ourselves linked again with what was said earlier on the need of the modern world for religion. Huxley said that “the religious feeling” was “the essential basis of conduct”. From the most primitive times, among all the races of men, religion has been the chief agent in morals. It furnishes a discipline. Sanctions are stronger if they are also sanctities. When our mundane affairs are seen as one piece in a universal scheme, then each human life rises above the trivial, every character becomes of moment and every act a sign.

For this reason the present weakening of religious influence cannot fail to be a cause of grave and general anxiety. If the ancient buttress of morality is itself sinking, how can it be supported?

The answer can only be that which was given earlier, but which comes now, in the light of these considerations, with even greater insistence through a more press-

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ing sense of urgency. The answer must be that it is vital to offer to the modern world systems of religion which can be accepted—not merely formally and perfunctorily, out of respect for old traditions and for lack of something better—but honestly and earnestly, faiths that can be woven into the pattern of practical life and determine the daily conduct of ordinary men, and can do this because they are believed by the enlightened mind as true

Good will is the best sanction for morals, but good will is not universal; and we cannot be sure that it can soon, or ever, be made so. One man has it in high degree; his neighbour in less degree, or hardly at all. As Santayana says, "the social instincts, seated in the human heart, differ indefinitely from individual to individual, and may be atrophied altogether." Our honest man may feel the need for some support for his honesty, and he may find it in the knowledge that it is the best policy.

Society will be wise to see that this shall in fact be so. It cannot safely rely only on pure altruism. It will try to enlist egoistic motives of one kind in order to counter the pull of egoistic motives of another kind. It will give inducements that appeal to some personal interest in order to persuade him to subordinate other personal interests. It may be regrettable that this should be necessary, but such is the fact. Any nation which abolished all restraints upon bad action and all rewards for good action, in the hope that every man would always do right just for the sake of the right, would dissolve quickly into chaos. Those conditions are an ideal, but a distant ideal. We may advance

towards them; we dare not act as though they were already here.

Rewards and penalties may be of various kinds. Theology offers one code, public opinion another; the economic system a third, the State a fourth. One man will pursue goodness for the sake of a divine recompense, another for the sake of good repute, or—as the road to fame; a third as a means to material comfort or to affluence, another in order to win approval or distinction from the public authorities, and in any case to avoid penalties at the hands of the law. Inferior though these motives are to the pursuit of goodness for its own sake, society, in the present stage of civilization, cannot afford to neglect them

Because man is a social being he cares for the judgement of his fellows. He is gratified by praise and hurt by blame. Everyday observation shows that where there is no effective public opinion, morals more easily become lax. As John Stuart Mill wrote: “Undoubtedly mankind would be in a deplorable state if no principles of justice, veracity, beneficence, were taught publicly or privately, and if these virtues were not encouraged, and the opposite vices repressed, by the praise and blame, the favourable and unfavourable sentiments, of mankind” The connexion between conduct and its consequence is of the essence of morality. “The way of the transgressor is hard”, because society sees that it shall be hard. “The family that accumulates goodness”, says the Chinese *Yih King*, “is sure to have superabundant happiness, the family that accumulates evil is sure to have superabundant misery” So far as that is true, the reason is to be found, not only in the happiness that comes from a good

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conscience and the misery from a bad, but also because society tries so to shape its laws and customs that those who are good shall be happy, and those who are bad shall not.

The best community would be one in which no one was ever inclined to wrongdoing, but since that cannot be attained and we have to be content with a second-best, we may find it in a community where all those who are disposed to do right will find it advantageous to do so, and all disposed to do wrong would find it not advantageous—using that word to include, not only material advantages, but all the satisfactions that men desire, good repute among them. In such a society, with conduct and consequence closely connected, crime would always be stupid and every knave would know himself a fool

There is a doubt to which a doctrine such as this may give rise. It may be feared that the pressure of public opinion and of law may weaken the springs of self-reliance and the power of personal initiative. A social system, indeed, that made its people well-behaved at the cost of keeping them enslaved, or apathetic, or merely conventional, must be a bad social system. But this raises the general issue of Liberty, which can best be discussed later in another context.

Among the ordinary supports of morals in everyday life we may see that habit is of the first importance. The normal person is not constantly reflecting whether he shall be honest or not; he is honest by habit and as a matter of course

Habits are formed under instruction, or by one's own actions. They grow by mere force of repetition. Things constantly done come to be done subconsciously,

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through a psychological mechanism that does not call into operation the conscious will. This applies not only to muscular movement—in walking, speaking, eating, it applies to activity of almost any kind. There is literal truth in the proverb that habit is second nature. “Could the young”, as William James wrote, “but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone.” Habit is capitalized action.

In the moral sphere there is an “ease reached by frequency of right doing.” Habit becomes conscience. To the primitive man the forbidden totem animal, the tabooed action or food, become instinctively abhorrent. To the civilized man of a higher religion that which he counts as sin may be so obnoxious to him that he becomes incapable of committing it.

Here we find another motive of an egoistic kind that may lead us to do what is right when other things are pleasanter. It is the effect of our actions upon our own character. Every deed has subjective as well as objective results; it has a recoil upon the doer. As Bergson puts it: “It is right to say that what we do depends upon what we are, but it is necessary to add that we are, in some measure, what we do, and that we are creating ourselves continually.” One of the penalties of any wrong act is its reaction upon the character of the agent. “The greatest penalty of evil-doing”, says Plato, “is to grow into the likeness of bad men.”

In forming his habits each person is largely influenced by what he sees around him. He is largely guided by “custom-thought.” This is one means through which

a nation becomes homogeneous, and the social mechanism runs with continuity and, on the whole, with smoothness. "Habit", to quote William James again, "is the enormous fly-wheel of society"

So we reach a conclusion as to the sanctions for morality.

There is one class of right actions which bring immediate benefit to the agent. He will do such actions for that reason and will need no other

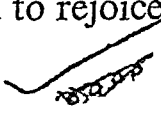
There is a second class which are not to his immediate benefit, but which he sees, or may be brought to see, will bring him some kind of indirect or ultimate gain. He may do these actions also from egoistic motives—material or non-material. Society will use all its many means of influence so as to strengthen the inducements to right action and to weaken the inducements to wrong. Public opinion will persuade and dissuade. If need be, there are in reserve the penalties of the civil and the criminal law.

But there is also the third class of right actions, those which will bring to the agent personally no benefit in this life, whether direct or indirect, immediate or ultimate, which may even cause him hurt. Yet he ought to do them because they conduce to social welfare. Unless his religious faith supplies him with an egoistic motive in an expectation of reward in another life, he must act for some reason other than self-interest. "Virtue", said Carlyle, "is its own reward, because it needs no reward." He must act from kindness or love, from patriotism, or from sense of duty of some other kind; he must act altruistically.

This class of motive springs, equally with the egoistic,

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from instincts that are primary. Sympathy is innate, as well as self-interest. The task of society is to foster and develop the altruistic instinct, to fortify it by early training, and to enlist in its support the power of habit. So there may gradually be evolved a social order in which all shall "endeavour to do well and to rejoice".



## CHAPTER TEN

### FAMILY

IN this and the following chapters, I propose to discuss in outline the application of these principles of ethics to four of the chief problems of social life. They are problems as old as civilization itself, but which in our own times take on new forms and press with a new insistence. They are the problems of the Family, of Property, of Liberty and of International Relations. I shall end by drawing together the threads of the whole argument and offering a conclusion

Every home, in any country or under any social system, is constantly faced by questions of family duty. How far should husband or wife sacrifice their separate wishes for the sake of the other? How far should married couples sacrifice their comforts for the sake of children? Should the marriage bond be rigid, or should it be elastic, and if so, to what degree? Each young man or woman has to consider both duties to the home and duties to oneself. Each has to decide whether to marry, and whom and when, whether to observe sexual abstinence before marriage, and continence after. In some eastern countries questions of polygamy or of child marriage are still subjects of debate

Until the present age all such matters were usually settled by custom. Tradition and public opinion, supported sometimes by law, decided individual conduct. Custom might differ greatly, according to religion, or



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to the degree of civilization "At one time and in one place", says a character in one of Mr. Aldous Huxley's novels, "you honour your father and mother when they grow old; elsewhere and at other periods you knock them on the head and put them into the *pot-au-feu*" Though custom varied from age to age or from country to country, it existed, it was powerful; it was usually respected. If any man disobeyed, his neighbours condemned him, he was of bad repute; in some cases the law might punish him, he himself felt that he was doing wrong. Women conformed to custom even more submissively than men. But now, in this sphere also, there is doubt. Our parents or grandparents regarded it as wrong to do this or that. But we ask, is it really wrong? How much of the old conventions should stand? Should anything stand?

A number of causes have promoted a change in the attitude to marriage and the family. The growing emphasis on self-expression has made restraint more irksome. The emancipation of women, already largely achieved in the countries of western civilization and advancing rapidly in the East, has called for many readjustments. Religious sanctions have weakened, in this as in other matters, civil marriage has been introduced, divorce legalized in Christian countries; marriage has come to be regarded more as a contract and less as a sacrament. There has been a tendency to discredit nineteenth-century standards, as the laxity and hypocrisy which sometimes underlay them have been more fully brought to light. The invention of methods of birth-control involves consequences of which, maybe, we are seeing only the beginning.

As civilization advances, the conditions that, in earlier



regard it lightly ?—then we shall take one course. Do we think it important ?—we shall take another

History, when it looks behind events, sees that the customs of nations with regard to family have had profound effects upon their character, and so upon their destiny. The strength of the family system was a principal foundation of the greatness of Rome, of the permanence of China, of the valour and efficiency of Japan. Scottish clannishness has contributed not a little to the striking achievements of Scotsmen. Such successes as have been won by the Jewish people have been largely due to family solidarity and stimulus.

The knight or the yeoman in the great and simple days of early Rome, who had been accustomed to worship at the shrines of his ancestors, to offer annual sacrifice on their birthdays, place garlands about their tablets and meditate upon their memories, who knew that he in turn would live in the thoughts of his descendants, with honour or dishonour according to his deeds—had a constant and powerful incentive to duty. So with other times and peoples, so, in some degree, with ourselves. Each member of a family knows that there is a group of people, intimate from his childhood, who would feel pride in his success, sorrow at his failure, shame at his disgrace. The man who has no one to care about him loses both an encouragement and a restraint.

In discussing the sanctions for morality we have seen how essential it is that public opinion should exert itself to strengthen the inducements to right action. Family opinion is a form of public opinion. It is on a small scale, but it acts at close range. A temptation may be

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resisted when a man remembers that a wrong action will degrade the name left by his forbears and will be condemned by his descendants. Family honour is a stand-by for social morality.

Useful to society, family still remains necessary to the individual. Obviously that is so with the child. A friendly and stable home is the right environment for childhood; there cannot be a really happy childhood without it. Recent psychology has revealed how deep are the effects upon adult character of the influences that surround the child. To the young man or woman the family supplies a background; a base from which to sally out upon the world, upon which, if conditions are adverse, to retreat. No matter what assistance the community may give in times of difficulty through its social services, there will still be need for a helping hand—close by and sympathetic.

No one lives fully who does not share, in some degree and in the measures suited to him, in all the activities that go to the making of the best life. Physical, intellectual, economic, domestic, religious activities—no life can be complete which omits any of these. The home and the world are therefore the right environment, the self-centred or the separated life is inferior. And the essence of the home is stable marriage.

Here, as everywhere, there must be sought that balance between egoism and altruism which is the very essence of the art of living. If what has been said is sound, the conclusion must be that more weight should be laid in the scale of self-restraint and self-sacrifice than present tendencies often would allow. Self-realization is good in itself; but the point that emerges is that the movement of these times towards egoism, healthy up

to a point, ought not to be carried so far as to sweep away, or even to impair, the family system.

A tendency is not to be counted good merely because it is considered modern.

‘ Old things need not be therefore true ’—  
O brother men, nor yet the new.

If ancient customs are to be indiscriminately discarded on the ground that they can all be nothing more than empty inhibitions, we may find sometimes that the gain in immediate freedom is far outweighed by the loss in ultimate welfare

A convention need not be absurd because its original sanction was irrational. Some of our present customs may have been first established by the help of magic, taboos or myths, nevertheless there may be good customs among them. We do not observe one day's rest in seven because we now believe that the world was made in six days, that the Creator rested on the seventh, and that He wishes us to do the same; yet the practice may be beneficial and one that it is wise to maintain. So with marriage and the family system, and the traditions and sanctities that surround them.

The proper grounds for divorce is a question now under debate in many countries. This book is not a discussion of topical proposals in this or other matters in one country or any other, but seeks to deal with the ideas and principles that underlie particular proposals. Here the factors point to the conclusion that to maintain the stability of marriage is of prime social importance not less important than the need of affording relief to

exceptional cases when conditions have become intolerable. If unions can be lightly broken they will be lightly made. Homes are no longer secure, and the children suffer.

The practice of birth-control raises new and difficult problems, social as well as personal. What is the optimum population for a country is an economic and political question to which the leaders of thought everywhere are beginning to address themselves. In spite of the halving of the rate of infant mortality in a number of western countries in recent years, the diminution in the birth-rate is considered by many observers to have been carried already too far; and if that view is right, there is offered to prospective parents an urgent practical problem in social ethics.

Methods of birth-control, as well as advances in preventive and curative medicine, have lessened the risks and the penalties that attach to unchastity. None the less, promiscuity would be likely still to prove, as it has proved throughout history, a sure road to degeneration of physique and degradation of character. If new conditions in the modern world are to lead to a wide-spread laxity in sexual morals, the level of civilization cannot fail to be lowered.

Nowhere has research been more fruitful in recent years than in the fields of embryology and heredity. Investigation along Mendelian lines is discovering the right principles for selective breeding. "Heredity and breeding", says Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, "are becoming exact experimental sciences". Efforts to adapt the rules to mankind, so far as practicable, have given us the new science of Eugenics.

As the means are discovered by which the physical

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qualities of the human race may be improved generation by generation, to make use of those means will rank as a duty. It has long been a matter of conscience, when choosing a wife or a husband, to have regard to physical and mental qualities for the sake of the general stock. To put debased money into circulation is an offence, but to put degenerate men and women into circulation is an offence far graver.

It seems likely that, in this matter of the family, there will develop two contrasted schools of thought, each, as time goes on, defining more and more clearly its own philosophy. The one will lay stress upon freedom, self-satisfaction, enjoyment; will treat sexual relationships lightly; will regard a marriage as experimental, separation or divorce as merely an incident in a life; will prefer to be childless, or to have only one child or two, and in any case will look upon children's interests as secondary. The other school will lay stress upon lasting affection, stability, the home, upon children; upon the social value of the family system. They will regard the permanency of a marriage as a matter of course; adultery, separation, divorce as a disaster and a disgrace—outside their purview altogether. Their own matrimonial differences they will resolve, because they hold that they must be resolved. They will not expose their own children to the fate of the children of broken marriages, with half a home in one place and half a home in another, and missing something always.

In between the two schools there will be many gradations, but fundamentally there are those opposite philosophies, and the world must choose between them. The one draws its strength from a potent instinct. It

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has the support of many brilliant minds in literature and the other arts. Nevertheless it is likely that in the long run the other school will prevail; and that for three reasons. First, because those who follow it find, as a rule, more satisfaction in their lives than do the others. ✓ Their experience shows that on the whole it is the better way to live, and it will therefore be taken as an example. The second reason is that it is to the interest of society to maintain the family as an institution; whenever it seems to be threatened, the social forces will be mobilized to fight for it. ✓ And the third is that those who hold the other view, and act upon it, have few progeny or none, so that those strains and tendencies, as fast as they appear in one generation, are bred out from the next ✓



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### POVERTY AND PROPERTY

OF the many hindrances to welfare in our present civilization none is more destructive than poverty. Poverty fetters men's lives; it lowers physique; vitiates happiness; evokes resentment and bitterness. From the protest and struggle against it springs the widespread social unrest that is one of the main causes of the uneasiness and instability of our time.

For a century and a half the peoples of Europe have been striving to lift themselves out of poverty. Their efforts have been sometimes sporadic, sometimes continuous; occasionally violent, usually pacific; marked often by intense fervour, and drawing upon inexhaustible wells of self-sacrifice. The upheaval of the French Revolution was social and economic rather than constitutional. Ever since that time, all over Europe, the industrial workers, and, less generally, the peasants and farm labourers, have been struggling to escape from the cramped and degrading conditions which were partly an inheritance from the Middle Ages, and partly the outcome of the Industrial Revolution. The introduction of machinery, the gathering together of masses of workers, an unrestrained competition in the labour-market, together with recurring cycles of bad trade, created the modern proletariat and brought untold numbers into misery. The American continent escaped, until recently, most of these evils; relatively small populations had the use of immense natural resources; energy and enterprise were free from laws and traditions

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that hampered the Old World. On the other hand, the crowded parts of Asia have known a poverty more widespread and more intense than the worst in Europe.

The century and a half of effort has brought striking improvements almost everywhere. Viewing the world as a whole, there can be no doubt that the material standard of living of mankind is far higher now, on the average, than in any previous period in history. But averages are often misleading. A grinding poverty persists, affecting hundreds of millions. Hundreds of millions more are cramped by narrowness of means and harassed by insecurity of livelihood. "Hope, freedom and change", wrote Marshall, "are necessary for efficiency" They are necessary for happiness too; but multitudes are denied them by poverty.

The long effort has achieved only part of its purposes, but it has won general agreement as to the rightness of the aim. Throughout the civilized countries, among the great majority of thoughtful men, there is now a clear conviction that the cure of bad economic conditions must be made, deliberately and persistently, a principal aim of private and public action. In the democratic countries, every political party proclaims this among its main purposes. The dictatorships also proclaim it. In Russia it has been made the fundamental principle of the State. In India we see the beginnings of a wide movement for raising the condition of the people. Even China is stirring.

In the last century there was no such approach to agreement. The individualist school was powerful. Deploring the vile conditions of the industrialized masses and anxious to see them remedied, it held that this could best be accomplished by non-interference and

"letting things take their natural course". Political economy in its early days, having fallen into false assumptions as to an "economic man" and as to the fluidity of enterprise, labour and commodities, preached a doctrine of *laissez-faire* which, when practised, was found to bring disaster "No one now holds", says Professor Whitehead, "that, apart from some further directive agency, mere individualistic competition, of itself and by its own self-righting character, will produce a satisfactory society" Mr. Keynes quotes Cairnes as declaring, already in 1870, "The maxim of *laissez-faire* has no scientific basis whatever, but is at best a mere handy rule of practice"; and Keynes adds, "this, for fifty years past, has been the view of all leading economists" Few will now hold that law must always lessen liberty, most will agree that rightly devised, law may defend liberty and expand it "There is a general admission that liberty is no fixed quantity which necessarily diminishes as corporate control increases"<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally a voice is still heard, like that of Dr. Carrel in his *Man the Unknown*, declaring that all our humanitarian legislation is misconceived from the beginning, it merely "keeps alive the weaklings", and it would be better for the race to let them die. Such voices are few, for it is plain to most observers that the conditions which kill off weaklings also produce them Improve on the other hand the surroundings, the nutrition and the medical care of infants, and we may, it is true, be keeping alive some children who will still be delicate and a burden to the community; but we shall also save a far larger number of children from being

<sup>1</sup> See also the following chapter.

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made delicate and becoming a burden. And so in other cases. ✓

To speak of "natural" and "artificial" in this connexion is a misuse of the words. A mountain or a river, the soil or the climate are natural; but any social environment, no matter what it may be, or any law, or absence of law, is not. These are all the products of human acts or decisions, and are therefore "artificial". An industrial system, whatever its type, can never be "natural". To leave it unregulated, by legal codes or by collective bargaining, does not make it so.

In the consensus of opinion that now prevails as to the evil of poverty and the urgency of a cure, religion also joins. For religion no longer, as formerly, strikes a separate note. In earlier days many held a religious faith that demanded a complete devotion to non-material values, and therefore an acceptance of poverty; to be poor was a means of grace rather than an injury. But now every western Church joins in the general movement towards economic betterment. The saying, "Ye have the poor with you always" is seldom quoted nowadays—divorced from its context and misinterpreted—as a plea for quietism among the poor and an excuse for complacency among the rich.

It is recognized that, for the average of mankind, material values are a necessary substratum for spiritual. Although it is true that life is more than livelihood, that thought and leisure, love and beauty are of greater worth than "things", nevertheless things, as a general rule and in their proper measure, are prior conditions for those others. Inferior they may be, but essential they certainly are; and to tell the poor not to resent their poverty because knowledge, or saintliness, or a contented spirit

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are more than riches, is stigmatized now as no better than cant.

Nor is the argument any longer heard that hard economic facts make it impossible, in any event, for all to live in comfort. A generation ago it was commonly said that if all the wealth in the world, or in any particular country, were to be divided equally, the standard of living of the poorer classes would still hardly be raised. The rich are so few and the poor so many that to impoverish the one class would not go far towards enriching the other. At that time there was some ground for such a contention. But now it is clear that the question need not be limited to a redistribution of a given quantum of wealth, but is also one of an expanded production of wealth. The application of science—mechanical and chemical and biological—to industry and to agriculture has gone so far, and opens such ample prospects for the future, that shortage is no longer a barrier.

We often hear it said, indeed, that mechanism is so all-pervading in these days that man has become the slave of the machines he has created. It is a hasty judgement, the contrary rather is true. The machines are our substitute for the slave-system of the ancient world. If working conditions are not properly adapted they may, it is true, inflict a nerve-strain and a monotony which it is urgent to prevent. The fact remains that the machines, allied with chemistry and biology, have given, to a vastly increased population an abundance and variety of commodities and amenities, together with a lightening of toil, such as our ancestors in their most sanguine visions could never have imagined. Certainly all substance has gone from the argument that

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poverty must endure, and be endured, because the world's wealth can never suffice to cure it.

The social unrest has a second source. It does not spring only from the struggle of the proletariats to escape from their material miseries. There is another, an immaterial factor—the sense of social injustice. Even if all the workers in every country were assured of comfort and security, while much of the bitterness of the conflict would disappear, the conflict itself would not be ended. In our economic system the inequalities of income are so immensely wide, they often spring from causes so indefensible—sometimes so largely fortuitous—that the moral sense revolts. A skilled artisan, after a long training, must work steadily through a whole year in order to earn a sum which he knows many wealthy men receive, without working, every week; some every day. If service has been rendered to society by men of enterprise, the rewards that they gain are often out of all proportion to the service. A fortune accumulated by some industrial pioneer descends to heirs who may have done nothing, and it may pass on from generation to generation, growing, unless checked, as it goes. Financial cleverness or lucky speculation often amasses wealth in proportions that are in striking contrast with the ordinary rewards of industry, efficiency and thrift. The economic side of modern civilization is shot through and through with injustice. And the worker in private industry, when he reflects upon his life and its conditions, not only knows all this, but knows also that he himself is spending his years in serving another man's purposes and in earning him profits.

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Is it strange that our age should be restless, unstable, insecure? It would be strange if it were not

That poverty is to be counted among the evils, and that a strenuous effort should be made to attack it, is generally agreed. But we are soon brought face to face with the great issue of the ownership of property and the distribution of wealth. Here there is no agreement. We enter the vast controversy which has plunged the modern world into industrial conflict, class antagonism, social revolution, sometimes civil war, and which threatens to divide Europe into hostile menacing camps.

Under the pressure of this situation, all kinds of social and economic experiments are being tried. The world of the present day is a vast sociological laboratory. The varied conditions and traditions of the different countries lead to the adoption of different methods. Russia tries one system, Germany and Italy another. Great Britain, together with most of the countries of western and northern Europe, adopts a third policy; which is now being followed also by the United States.

In Russia nearly one-tenth of the human race, occupying one-sixth of the land-area of the globe, are being subjected to a sudden and sweeping change in their economic conditions. Logically planned, ruthlessly enforced, it strives to make good in the course of a generation the arrears of centuries. Communist in name, the system, as yet, is one of State socialism, with some elements of communism intermingled. All the instruments of production, and most of the land, have been effectively socialized. Class inequalities, though not abolished, have been minimized. The livelihood

of the workers has been made secure, that of the non-workers destroyed. At the same time all discrimination of sex or race, though not of religion,<sup>1</sup> has been swept away.

Observers everywhere watch with keen interest this gigantic enterprise—undoubtedly one of the most momentous events in this period of the world's history. Is it to be an example, or is it to be a danger-signal, "a guide to direct or a beacon to warn"? Some watch with hope, rising to enthusiasm; others with revulsion and alarm.

It will be well not to forget that the conditions in Russia were unique. The vast area was under a centralized government; a monarchy, absolute in power, but bewildered and incompetent, at the close under the influence of a sinister and superstitious mysticism. There was an aristocracy, largely self-indulgent and irresponsible; a clergy, generally ill-educated and unspiritual, presenting religion in a form little calculated to win intelligent acceptance; a peasantry only two generations removed from serfdom; a proletariat inefficient and, like the peasantry, mostly illiterate, sunk in poverty, often living in miserable squalor. Within this society there developed an active-minded intellectual class, humanitarian, devoted, determined to effect an utter change, by any methods and at any cost. A slowly-widening education among the people brought them an audience and a backing. Into such a nation, so constituted and so conditioned, came the

<sup>1</sup> There is no preference for one faith over another, but professed believers in any religion are not admitted as members of the Communist Party and are therefore excluded from all share in the management of affairs. (See S and B Webb—*Soviet Communism*, Vol II, p 1012)



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ferment of a sanguinary and disastrous war, fought for distant and irrelevant objects. Such factors have no parallel. It is unlikely, therefore, that the Russian history will be repeated elsewhere.

The time has not yet come when it is possible to draw conclusions as to the results of the experiment, whether favourable or unfavourable. Certainly the average standard of living of the Russian workers has not yet been raised to that of the peoples of western Europe. It is not to be expected that it would be. In so short a time, starting from so much lower a level, handicapped by the need of devoting a large share of the available energy and resources to military defence, it would have been almost impossible for any régime to have achieved that result. But until it is achieved, the claims of the Soviet system, on the economic side, will not have been vindicated. Whether the progress that has been already made will continue in equal measure, the coming decades will show. By one means or another, it will be necessary to provide a sufficient substitute, in the normal working of the economic machine, for the motives of hope of profit and fear of dismissal that have been eliminated. Will a sense of social duty be enough? Will the initial enthusiasm and impetus continue, or else, as it dies down, will it be replaced by an effective training of the next generation? Will the ordinary human tendencies to inefficiency and corruption be overcome by the power of the humanitarian spirit, canalized into what seems to be a self-contradiction—a materialistic religion? And, further, will it be possible, consistently with an economic system of this order, to allow that measure of freedom in thought and action, in forming opinions, in choosing a career, which

is an essential mark of a good civilization? On all these questions it is too soon to form a judgement.

The dictatorships of Germany and Italy have their different way of handling the problems of poverty and inequality. Employment for profit is allowed to continue, but the Governments try to rule the economic waves and tides of a capitalist system by decrees and penalties. The ideas that underlie their economic policy are crude and confused, the results, as yet, unattractive. Observers in other countries find no guidance there.

The third system springs from no single dogma. It is seldom formulated as a whole. It makes no claim to be an "ideology". Yet, up to a point, it serves. Its results are visibly better, so far, than those of either of the two alternatives. Among the larger countries, although important parts originated in Germany, the system as a whole has been developed furthest in Great Britain, so that it is worth while to take the British method as the example.

If you go where poverty is, you will find that its causes are either personal or social. One home may be poverty-stricken because of bad health, or injury, or perhaps incompetence or bad character; another because of low wages in the trade, or of irregular work or unemployment due to distant factors. Illness or accident bring many families to disaster; drink or gambling, dishonesty or inefficiency, bring many more; the defects and failures of the economic system cause undeserved suffering—always to thousands, in bad times to millions. Personal faults and misfortunes are to be dealt with mainly by personal action, but

indirectly they are themselves often the outcome of social causes, and public action may help also, and powerfully. The social causes are a matter for the society itself. The British method tries to attack both the personal and the social. It proceeds upon several parallel lines. Throughout it brings voluntary organizations into co-operation with State action.

There is the system of national education. Our politics definitely broke with the theory of *laissez-faire* when the Elementary Education Act was passed in 1870. Since then a vast elaboration of schools, colleges and universities, of scholarships and fellowships, has been built up. It aims, not only at the training of the individual in knowledge and character as an end in itself, but also, and partly through that, it aims at attacking poverty and inequality. A class that is illiterate will certainly be inefficient, and therefore poor, its members will be denied openings for the talents they possess; ignorance will perpetuate inferiority. Universal education and equal opportunity is at least a step on the way to social justice.

There is the effort to improve environment. Here again, already in the nineteenth century, an active movement had been set on foot. The present century has seen a marked extension. A great system of law, public administration and voluntary action has been created for the safeguarding of health and the improvement of housing. The proper planning of towns has at last been begun. Opportunities for recreation are being provided. Not least important has been the careful control of the liquor traffic; nearly thirty thousand redundant, and often squalid, public houses have been swept away in thirty years.

The nation has made a great effort to ensure to all its members, at all times, at least a maintenance. The sick and the aged, widows and orphans, the blind and the feeble-minded, the unemployed and the victims of industrial accident—all these, by one method or another, are assured at all events against the extreme consequences of misfortune.

There has been a sustained endeavour, over a period of more than a hundred years, to conquer the evils of low wages, long hours, irregular work, unhealthy conditions of labour. Collective bargaining has been one means. Trade Unionism, at first persecuted and penalized, has been given full recognition. The settlement of wages and other working conditions through the joint deliberations of representatives of employers and employed, with arbitration in case of disagreement, once regarded by employers as an outrageous invasion of their rights, has now become a matter of course. Great codes of industrial law have provided another means, they deal with hours, health and safety; with wages also, in agriculture, and in a few other industries where collective bargaining does not yet obtain.

There has been some movement towards a more equal distribution of property. On the one hand the thrift of the people, and the creation of a vast network of co-operative societies, building-societies, and savings-banks, have brought into existence a large class of workers who are also small property-owners; a considerable part of the national wealth is now owned by them. On the other hand, taxation lops off much of the surplus of the larger incomes. Partly in order to provide means for the social services, partly owing to the exigencies of the War and of national defence, and

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partly because gross inequalities of wealth do not accord with a democratic constitution, the system of taxation in Great Britain has been transformed during the present century. The taxes upon incomes drawn from the ownership of capital and land are heavier than upon earned incomes, upon the larger incomes than upon the smaller; upon property that passes at death they rise to a high figure. The State takes half the incomes of very rich men during their lives, and again half of the property passing at their death.

The fundamental issue of the ownership of capital has not yet been faced. But there have been experiments. A practical people, sceptical of general theories, yet recognizing that the capitalist system has grave defects and may involve great dangers, has been exploring tentatively the possibilities of change. During the post-War period especially, new forms of ownership have been devised to fit different kinds of property. These, added to the old forms, have given us a strangely differentiated system of ownership, graded from unrestricted private control to full communism. The system is still in process of active development. It may produce in course of time an economic pattern different from any that the theorists of the various schools have proposed, and with results that may prove not only different, but better.

Our roads, bridges, public health equipment and elementary schools, our scheme of old age pensions also, are communal, the community maintains them, and anyone who needs the benefit of them may have it without payment. Our postal services, telegraphs and telephones, most of the electricity and gas supplies, of the ports and harbours, of the local transport systems

and of the higher educational institutions, are socialized; they are paid for, wholly or mainly, by those who use them, but they belong to the citizens in general and yield no private profit. Of the various insurance systems, some are national undertakings and some are commercial. The Broadcasting Corporation is neither a State enterprise nor a profit-making concern. By far the largest retail trading organization in the country is co-operative. A number of undertakings belong to shareholders and are under their control, but with statutory limits on the prices charged and the profits made; the remaining gas, electricity and water companies, the passenger transport service of London, and its port, are in this class. Many housing societies and other public utility bodies are also privately-owned and managed, but are limited as to profits. The fares and rates on the railways are regulated by the State. Over the rest, and doubtless the greater part, of industry, private ownership and management remains; restricted only by the general laws for safeguarding good government and the welfare of the workers.

The system of land-ownership has changed little from medieval times. National and local authorities have purchased a small fraction of the area of the soil for various public purposes, including the provision of houses, allotments and small holdings; and there has been some special protection of the interests of tenants as against landlords. But in the main the system of land-ownership is the same as in the Middle Ages.

Very characteristic of the British people is this jumble of varied and apparently inconsistent methods; this irregular and constantly moving frontier between public and private enterprise, between State and voluntary

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action; all this complex policy of equal opportunity, better environment, guaranteed minimum standard, collective bargaining, industrial regulation, diffused ownership, differentiated taxation

It has grown up half-consciously, piecemeal, as occasion required. There is nothing here that is logical or symmetrical. There is nothing analogous to the theory of Marx and the measures of Lenin, to Hegel and the policy of the Nazis, or to Italian Fascism. Observers in other countries may watch it with bewilderment. "Socialism", they seem to say, "is a policy; Communism is a policy; even Fascism has an economic policy of a sort. But what is this? It has not even a name." A plea of Guilty must be entered here. Nevertheless the British method of social development—without a name and without a conscious plan, yet with a general aim vaguely perceived—has won a large measure of practical success. So the British Constitution grew, and so the British Empire and the Law of England.

I look back, across more than a quarter of a century, to the work of the Ministry of 1906. It is now generally recognized that, during the eight years from its formation to the outbreak of the War, a greater measure of social progress was achieved, along those lines, than in any equal period before or since. We ourselves saw that work, not as something haphazard, but as part of a coherent policy, begun by those who had gone before us, to be continued and expanded by those who should come after. But it is doubtful if the nation so recognized it then, or recognizes even now that it has succeeded in evolving a new social practice of its own. Equally the British nation was unaware that it had a

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Constitution, or that it had an Empire, until the one and the other had become too obvious to be overlooked.

Up to a point the policy serves. Viewed as a whole and from first to last, we may see that it has reduced ignorance, disease, mortality, drunkenness and crime, has enlarged knowledge, improved health and increased comfort to a degree that an earlier generation could hardly have hoped. Imagine for a moment that all this complex system, gradually and elaborately built up, were to be swept away by some political cataclysm, imagine that the people were thrown back into the social conditions of a century ago, and the extent of the gain will stand clear.

Up to a point it has served But only up to a point Poverty persists Less wide-spread relatively, and less cruel in its effect, nevertheless it persists. The inequalities of wealth have been softened, but only a little. No one will deny that our social system is still full of injustice. New problems have arisen from the growth of monopolies and semi-monopolies, and the need, in the public interest, of controlling them In all the other countries which have been proceeding on more or less the same lines as Great Britain the situation in these matters is much the same The question which now faces us all is whether similar principles of action, carried further, will suffice to remedy the grievances that still remain, vitally affecting millions everywhere; or whether the nations must have recourse to more sweeping measures, carried out by more drastic methods.

On this momentous issue no one can form a considered opinion without taking into account, not only



the actual defects of the present system, but the possible defects of an alternative. Necessarily that must be a matter of speculation, except to the limited extent that Russian experience gives guidance. Risks are many and obvious ✓

On the economic side, it is not safe to dismiss lightly the question of adequate production. It is not enough to say that, thanks to science, the world's productive capacity is already so great, and can so easily be expanded further, that there will always be enough commodities to allow comfort for everyone. That is so, no doubt, if industries are efficiently managed and if commerce runs smoothly. But those conditions are not guaranteed by the nature of things. It is easy for any industrial undertaking to drop ten per cent. or twenty per cent. in its efficiency. In commerce all kinds of factors enter—the skilful or the unskilful management of public finance, public credit and currency, the freeing or restricting of the channels of trade. It is clear that comfort for the masses of a population is a matter not only of the equitable distribution of the wealth that is produced, but also of a production that shall be efficient and plentiful. If this is not assured, it would be a better choice for the workers to receive two-thirds, perhaps, of present abundance than the whole of future scarcity.

A second factor is the ultimate effect, upon the character of a people, of a monopoly of production, and a monopoly of the Labour-Market. If the State is sole producer and sole employer, can the interest of the individual as consumer and as employee be sufficiently safeguarded? The Russian system sets out to do this, but, as yet, with doubtful success. In the

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second generation, and the next, what will be the outcome?

A third factor is the need of preserving the cultural heritage of the past. No one will deny that hitherto it has been the well-to-do classes who have stimulated invention, encouraged art, developed other amenities of life and maintained the standards of culture. They have been, at least in recent centuries, the pace-makers of civilization. It is vital in this to safeguard the future. "Many", said Matthew Arnold. "are to be made partakers in well-being, true; but the ideal of well-being is not to be, on that account, lowered and coarsened." It may be possible to provide alternatives; they are already beginning to appear; and a culture springing from the people may have distinctive and fine qualities. But a changing order of society would be wise to bring the new agencies into being before destroying the old. Otherwise there would be a gap, and much that is valuable might disappear and be lost.

Any process that was sudden, sweeping and levelling might cause as much injustice as it cured. The Russian revolution has been cruel and bloody. Not only has it brought material ruin upon vast numbers of people, but it has inflicted forced labour, imprisonment, exile or death upon vast numbers more. The cutting-out of the whole class of well-to-do peasants from the social system, "the liquidation of the Kulaks", has meant the ruin of about a million families, the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Mr and Mrs. Sidney Webb, observers whose judgement is favourable on the whole to the new régime, say of this episode that "the sum of human suffering involved is beyond all computation." A movement

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on behalf of humanity should not itself be inhumane. "Violence", said Carlyle, "does even justice unjustly"

These factors are important. They cannot be ignored. It is true that they may be pressed unduly. Self-interest leads many among the wealthy classes in all countries to seize upon considerations such as these as a defence against any large measures of economic change, regardless of need or of merit. The dangers are magnified. Possible risks are represented as certain disasters. But when exaggerations have been discounted, points of substance remain. There is a real risk of deterioration, both economic and cultural. There is the risk of violence and injustice. The conclusion emerges that change should be gradual.

But it need not for that reason be slow or halting. The pace must largely depend upon the degree of opposition that is encountered. That there will be many among the possessing classes who will offer a tenacious resistance to all measures of serious change is probably inevitable. Moved really by the narrowest self-interest, they will no doubt persuade themselves, and try to persuade others, that they are the champions of industrial progress and a stable society. "It is an old observation how Interest smooths the road to Faith". But it need not be assumed that the propertied classes will be solid in their opposition.

When in Great Britain, in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the floods of social discontent were rising, when they found a political channel and swept forward in the movement for constitutional reform, their final success was due, not only to the enthusiasm

and unity of the unenfranchised masses, and not only to the fear among the others that to deny reform might bring revolution, but also to the frank recognition, by many leading men among the aristocracy and the rich, that the reformers were right. In that great crisis, when the whole future of the country, social and economic as well as political, depended upon the outcome, a peaceful decision was reached because those who controlled the Parliament constituted under the old system were wise enough to consent to the enactment of the new. The economic issue now is not unlike the constitutional issue then. The course of events may be similar.

There exists that large measure of agreement, permeating all classes, as to the evil and the danger of poverty and flagrant social injustice. It is remarkable how little resentment there is among the owners of unearned wealth against its taxation at rates unheard of in any previous period. Few can fail to realize that it would be intolerable that, fifty or a hundred years from now, poverty should remain unredressed, that the same wretchedness should still afflict great classes of the populations. So it may be that, without any violent resistance, or even controversy, the many parallel lines of progress that have been pursued during the last few decades, and have carried the peoples far toward their goal, will be followed farther during the coming years, and more quickly because of the more general assent.

But if not ?

Then it needs no great prescience to see that, in Great Britain, in the United States, and in other countries as well, if the social changes that are indispensable do not come gradually and by consent, they will come nevertheless, but convulsively and by compulsion. The

owning classes could fall into no greater error than to suppose that if property is to survive, poverty must be accepted also. The opposite is more likely to be true. If poverty continues, the property system will not.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### LIBERTY<sup>1</sup>

ANOTHER ingredient in the seething cauldron of our times is the conflict that has arisen on liberty. At the beginning of this century it seemed as though that were among the settled questions. There might be exceptions here and there; some countries might be laggards in the march to freedom; but all enlightened men everywhere sought the same ultimate goal.

Nations should be free from alien domination the nineteenth century had seen the overthrow of Napoleon's empire over Europe, the birth of the republics of South and Central America, the Italian *risorgimento*, the liberation of the Balkan peoples. These were illustrious examples of a rule destined to become universal.

Nations should be self-governing. the young democracies of the United States and France had become mature, the old democracy of Great Britain had almost completed her system; her great colonies had adopted it eagerly, Germany, Austria, Japan, Turkey, had set up their Parliaments, though with limited powers; even Russia had established its Duma; India and China were on the move. Here was the pattern set for civilized mankind

Within the nation, the individual should be free—free to think, worship, speak and act as he would—subject

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this and the next chapter were included in my Presidential Address for 1936 to the British Institute of Philosophy, published in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, February 1937, under the title "Wars of Ideas"

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to the similar rights of others ; free, under the protection of equal justice, to pursue his lawful business as he chose. John Stuart Mill, it was thought, had stated unanswerably, and once for all, the case for personal liberty. In all these rights women should equally share.

And the world was at last beginning to realize that there was also another kind of freedom, not less essential—economic freedom—that men should no longer be bound down, from birth to death, by the hampering restrictions that come from poverty, overwork and bad environment ; that freedom consists not only in absence of restraint but also in presence of opportunity ; that through their trade unions, or by the help of the law, the workers should be liberated from the oppressions of the industrial system.

For liberty is not, as is usually supposed, a single and simple conception. It has the four elements—national, political, personal, economic. The man who is fully free is one who lives in a country which is independent, in a State which is democratic ; in a society where the laws are equal and restrictions at a minimum, in an economic system in which he has the latitude of a secure livelihood and assured comfort, and full opportunity to rise by merit.

Not long ago all this was widely agreed. That liberty was a good thing was accepted as a root-principle of politics. If national freedom was still incomplete in parts of the Austrian and Russian and Turkish Empires, and in Ireland and India also ; if some of the Parliaments had not yet grown into their full powers ; if oppressive laws continued here and there ; if still in a number of countries trade unions were hampered and

employers autocratic—these were merely survivals of a rapidly disappearing past. The course of events would soon carry mankind along the few stages that remained, and liberty be established everywhere in all its fullness.

After the Great War the Peace Treaties did in the main continue the trend. Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, peoples of the Baltic and of the Balkans, Arab territories, were liberated from foreign rule. The three Empires of Central and Eastern Europe disappeared. Parliaments were newly created in some countries, enlarged their powers in others. If in Russia a dictatorship was set up, it was a dictatorship that spoke in the name of the people and worked in their interests. Within the British Empire, not long after the War, self-government was established fully in Ireland, and in large measure in India. Almost everywhere there was a rapid expansion of personal and economic freedom.

Then, over a great part of Europe, came the sudden reaction. Viewed in retrospect, the causes stand out clearly. There was economic depression; whole classes were ruined through currency inflation; low wages and wide-spread unemployment gave rise to industrial turmoil. Some of the democratic Parliaments and Governments showed themselves incapable of handling the situation. In the countries defeated in the War a revived national spirit rebelled against the harsh economic conditions and the one-sided disarmament that had been imposed. The opportunity was seized by ambitious men, resolute and able. Supported by a great body of opinion which was eager for the re-establishment of authority and order and normal conditions for work and business, they overturned the existing constitutions. Seeking a basis for a different



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régime, they found it in a political philosophy which had been shaping itself, almost unnoticed, in the previous years, and which was ready to their hand.

This philosophy is intensely national, sometimes racial. It is anti-democratic and militarist. Many thinkers have been drawn upon in its development: Hegel, Fichte, Nietzsche, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Sorel, Croce, Bergson—others as well. It has taken definite shape in the creeds of Italian Fascism and German National-Socialism, and in replicas elsewhere.

Is this movement to be merely a temporary episode in European history? Or is there here the new model for the future—a doctrine which shall reverse the tendencies that have prevailed for a hundred and fifty years, and reshape the politics of the world?

At the base of this political philosophy, as has been mentioned earlier, is the tendency to depreciate intellect and to exalt intuition. This is the specific contribution drawn from Nietzsche, Croce and Bergson. It encourages political mysticism. A typical example may be found in an utterance of Herr Hitler, in the course of a speech delivered soon after the reoccupation of the Rhineland and broadcast to the world: "I go my way", he said, "with the assurance of a somnambulist, the way which Providence has sent me."

This question of intuition and reason has been sufficiently discussed in a previous chapter. If the general conclusion be accepted that intuitive promptings must always be subject to rational criticism and control, then the Fascist-Nazi creed cannot be exempt from that test.

A second basic idea is the doctrine of militarism.

That can be discussed more conveniently in the next chapter, as part of the general question of international relations.

A third foundation is the Hegelian theory of the State, and the subordination to it of the individual

Hegel held that the State is a living entity, real in its own right, and supreme. The State, he said, "is the divine idea as it exists on earth . . . It is the absolute power on earth · it is its own end and object. It is the ultimate end which has the highest right against the individual" This metaphysical doctrine has been adopted in Italy as well as in Germany. It is expressed in the first article of the Fascist declaration of principles entitled, paradoxically, "The Charter of Liberty": "The Italian nation, by its power and duration, is an organism with a being, and ends and means of action, superior to those of the individuals, whether separate or grouped, of which it is composed"

The waning of the old theologies has left a spiritual void. In minds where they have not been replaced by a developed conception of Deity, and a faith and practice based upon it, this void gives room for all kinds of strange imaginings. The postulate of a transcendental State and Nation may be one. In Germany a new religion is being developed on those lines. For example, the Leader of the powerful German Youth Movement, Herr Baldur von Schirach, has made this declaration—in reply to charges that his organization was godless: "One cannot be a good German", he said, "and at the same time deny God, but an avowal of faith in the eternal Germany is at the same time an avowal of faith in the eternal God. For us the service of Germany is the service of God. If we act as true

Germans, we act according to the laws of God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler, the *Fuhrer*, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany, serves God "

Let us examine for a moment this doctrine of the reality of a living State. Visibly the State is nothing but a number of men and women organized for certain purposes of common action. Man is by nature social; human beings have an innate tendency to co-operate; but this does not confer " reality " on the forms which they may adopt to that end. Suppose that a group of young people, living in a growing suburb, come together to form a tennis club, there does not thereupon spring into existence a new metaphysical entity. It is the same if the scale be enlarged. When families organize themselves into a tribe under chiefs, or when the tribe grows into a nation, no such entity arises.

We may be misled by a metaphor or an analogy. The State in some respects resembles an organism. Herbert Spencer elaborated this in a well-known essay. But the State is not in fact an organism. That is a biological term, and the State is not biological.

Or we may be misled by the fact that the behaviour of men in a crowd is often different from the behaviour of the same people separately. It is the fallacy " that since man collectively is different from man individually, the crowd is in itself something apart from its members " The reasons for the difference have been analysed by Le Bon. As one of a crowd, the individual has a feeling of power through the strength of numbers. Not being easily identified, he loses his sense of personal responsibility. Ideas, suggested by a leader, may evoke a simultaneous response, a contagious sympathy, that submerges independent and critical thought.

There may even be some form of mass hypnosis. But all this does not constitute a new "being". The next day each member of the crowd must realize that he and his fellows were individually responsible for whatever was done; they cannot shift that responsibility to something other than themselves, for there was nothing other.

We may be misled again by the personification of nations in history. We have been so accustomed to read from early childhood of "England", "Germany", "Russia" and the rest, that as a matter of course we attach reality to those abstractions. Remembering that societies make history, we forget that it is individuals that make societies.

Nevertheless the significance of the State is not to be undervalued. Though not an organism, it is an organization, and momentous as such. Did it not exist, the civilized man could hardly exist either. If it were different from what it is, for good or for bad, the community would be different, and his own life would be different. The community is to the civilized man what the atmosphere is to the body. If it is pure and wholesome, he is healthy. If it is close and stifling, he stifles. If he is cut off from it, he dies.

A nation and its institutions are products of each other. Language, laws, customs, developed by the past generations are embodied in the present Society, and shape the future. Frenchmen make France, and France makes Frenchmen. It is the Frenchmen of yesterday who have made the France of to-day, and the France of to-day that makes the Frenchmen of to-morrow. Yet France apart from Frenchmen would be merely a geographical expression. Just as there can be

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no flock apart from the sheep, no swarm apart from the bees, no army apart from the soldiers, so there can be no State or Nation apart from the people. The State, the Nation, is a pattern, a grouping, and nothing more. It is not an entity in itself. The Hegelian theory belongs, not to philosophy, but to mythology.

The Fascist-Nazi system is based upon another doctrine, besides intuitionism, militarism and the Hegelian conception of the State—the principle of personal leadership. The aura surrounding the State is extended to its spokesman. Here the new philosophy pursues earlier tendencies. Frequently recurring in both German and Italian history is the cult of the Hero. The present *Führer-prinzip* is the formulation of old practice.

Dictatorships, it must be agreed, have their advantages, at all events at the outset. There may be speed of action and efficiency of administration such as democracies sometimes lack. But there are factors also on the other side. In the conduct of affairs, differences of opinion as to the right course to pursue must arise from time to time. If those differences are not settled by discussion and voting in elected assemblies, and ultimately by discussion and voting by the people, they have to be settled in other ways. In a dictatorship, whether Fascist, or Nazi, or indeed Communist, they are settled by the opinion of the dictator; and his opinion is formed under such personal influences as may be brought to bear upon him. No one is free to speak out plainly. If anyone differs, he runs the risk of being dismissed from office, or imprisoned, or exiled, or killed. Incipient opposition is ruthlessly suppressed. Intrigue takes the place of open dis-

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unanimous and decisive vote. Cavour, who had much experience both of Parliaments and of Palaces, gave it as his judgement that "the worst Chamber is better than the best ante-chamber."

The real test of the system of dictatorship comes with the ageing of the first dictator; still more with the succession of the second and the third. Even a Napoleon the Great had his Waterloo; and his heir was a Napoleon the Little with his Sedan. Only once, in all the long records of the history of the great States of the western world, do we learn of a succession of able rulers assuring strong and efficient government, under a personal régime, for as long a period as eighty years, and even the relatively favourable experience of the Roman Empire from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius was followed not long after by a complete collapse.

The surrender of political and personal liberties under the dictatorships is no light sacrifice. Let those of us who are citizens of English-speaking communities, or of France, Scandinavia or other countries where democracy continues, let us suppose for a moment that we, in our turn, were subjected to the conditions that have prevailed under the other system. Let us imagine that we were only allowed to read in our newspapers what a dominant political party, or a single individual, thought fit and desirable for us to read; that the events of the world could be reported to us only in part, and with a gloss; that we could hear at meetings or on the radio, see at theatres or the cinemas, only such things as authority might think suitable; that, regardless of any wishes of ours, our sons had all to be trained from earliest youth, in mind and body, to military ends; that at any moment

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us being allowed to know the truth about the issue, being able in any degree to influence the course of events in advance, or even to say a word in protest against being made accomplices in what might be a monstrous crime against some other State—imagine that, and then we may have some conception of the sacrifice entailed to-day, upon the peoples of the greater part of Europe, by the system of dictatorship

If it be said that the populations themselves have surrendered their liberties by their own will, expressed by their own votes, let it be remembered that at the elections which have been held no opponents were allowed to present themselves and no criticism to be uttered. Every form of pressure was used to secure compliance. But even if the votes had been given freely and with open eyes, that would not outweigh or justify the forgoing of liberty. Edmond About said of France in the middle of the nineteenth century, when a parliamentary system was combined with a rigid centralization and constant Government interference, that “it was the pride of every Frenchman, when he looked into his glass in the morning, to think that he saw there the twenty-seven-millionth part of a tyrant, but he was apt to forget that at the same time he saw the whole of a slave.”

In the last resort, the issue is whether or not a high value is to be set upon self-reliance, freedom of the spirit

Those who hold that personal initiative is of importance, that the power to choose a course for oneself and to follow it of one's own volition is of importance; who hold that even a right action is not rightly done unless it is freely done; that there cannot be a great nation

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without great citizens—those who hold these things cannot but view the “totalitarian State”, and all it implies, with revulsion and antipathy. That road, they see, leads towards an insect civilization. “‘Consider the ant’—and beware of her! She is there for a warning.”

A further element in the Nazi-Fascist system is the emphasis laid on the economic side of life. In Italy this leads to the theory of the Corporate State. Every form of legislature chosen by the general body of citizens having been abolished, some kind of assembly has to be created in order not to leave too obviously empty the place where Liberty once stood. The idea is therefore adopted of regarding the State as a federation of corporations, each consisting of a group of industries or occupations. An assembly is set up consisting of their representatives. This is one of the many points in which Fascism and Marxism resemble each other. The “materialistic conception of history”, held by the communist, is of the same order of ideas as underlies the Corporate State of the Fascist.

It is a falsification of politics. Life is more than work; a citizen is something more than a member of a trade or profession; human history is more than a mere struggle of appetites for material things. That there is an economic factor in history is certain; that it is always important and sometimes predominant no one would deny. But to see in the evolution of civilization nothing more than a material process, to find in it no spiritual or rational purpose, is to take a biased and distorted view of the record of mankind in thought and action. A legislature has to deal with many affairs that have little relation, or none, to the particular occupation to which



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a citizen may belong—with education and all forms of culture, with environment generally, with public finance and public order, with national defence and international relations. The citizen, if he is to take part in public affairs at all, must do so as a man, and not merely as manufacturer or merchant, lawyer or doctor, farmer or craftsman or labourer. The idea of the Corporate State is misconceived from the beginning.

An analysis of the Nazi, Fascist and Marxist alternatives to systems based on political freedom does not lead to the conclusion that any one of them, or any combination of them, offers a basis that is to be preferred for the future politics of the world.

There are the four kinds of liberty, and their claims do not always pull the same way. We may find the key to many episodes in history, and the clue through much of the maze of the present times, when we realize that many of the controversies and conflicts are not between Power and Freedom, but between forces fighting for one form of liberty and forces fighting for another.

The nationalist stands for the freedom and independence of his country; for the sake of that cause he may become militarist; may insist upon conscription; may support dictatorship. The communist stands for economic freedom, for the liberation of the workers from industrial slavery; to uphold that cause he too may become militarist, may favour conscription, may support dictatorship. The democrat puts political and personal liberty in the first place; he may underestimate the need of defending national freedom or assuring

economic freedom. Each of the three may see only one aspect of liberty, and may fight to the death against those who prefer the others. The complexity of the politics of our age comes largely from the fact that there truly are times and places when one form of liberty has to be surrendered, wholly or in part, for the sake of another. The nineteenth century thought that liberty was a simple thing, men were for it or against it. The twentieth century finds that armies are enlisted, conflicts fought, wars threatened, each side claiming to be striving for the freedom of this or of that.

Abraham Lincoln was the staunchest of the friends of liberty; yet in the Civil War, in order to save the American Union as guardian of democracy, and in the cause of the abolition of slavery, he did not hesitate to use the compulsion of law in order to draft recruits for the Northern armies. To take a different example, a race that is backward in civilization may be well advised, at all events for a time, to accept an alien government, if that is necessary in order to stop or to prevent domestic tyranny and misrule; it may be better to postpone national and constitutional liberty for the sake of personal and economic liberty. And in every democracy, at all times, the individual has to accommodate his own will in some measure to the general will, his personal freedom of choice to the decisions of the free political system to which he belongs.

If free government means weak government, freedom will disappear in anarchy and the reaction that always follows anarchy. "Freedom is a great thing, but it must be built first of all on the foundation of government." A democratic society must keep a balance between the collective authority of all its members and the due liberty

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of each. Alexander Hamilton stated the case cogently "In a Government framed for durable liberty, not less regard must be paid to giving the magistrate a proper degree of authority to make and execute the laws with rigour, than to guard against encroachments upon the rights of the community; as too much power leads to despotism, too little leads to anarchy, and both eventually to the ruin of the people." He held that the aim should be to "unite public strength with individual security", and esteemed the British Constitution as being, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the only one in the world which achieved it.

The democrat will be ready to accept the Positivist motto, "Order and Progress", recognizing that order is necessary to progress, as in the modern world progress is necessary for order. He will obey the laws, even if he thinks them wrong; for others, whose opinions are equally valid, may think them right; and in any case, if they are wrong, in a democratic system the means are at hand for changing them. He will join in upholding the dignity of the State, since its prestige strengthens its authority and makes for its success. His politics will include elements both of radicalism and of conservatism. There are times and places when the energies of good citizens are needed most for measures of reform; but there may also be times in the history of any country when the chief duty is to prevent the sapping of authority. Post-War experience in Europe showed clearly enough that democracies may fall through their own fault, through failure to realize this condition and to fulfil it.

Some of them fell through excesses of the party spirit. Parties, indeed, are essential to the working of a demo-

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crazy. Someone must formulate policies and propound them to the people. Someone must choose candidates for electoral bodies and support them in the constituencies. Someone must organize the proceedings in the Legislature.<sup>1</sup> The right course is that men and women, who are of like mind on the chief issues of the time, should come together to achieve their ends, and to perform these functions as the means. If people of goodwill hold aloof from political organization, the State will sink into disorder, control will fall into worse hands, and they themselves will be penalized. "The punishment which the wise suffer," said Emerson, "who refuse to take part in the government, is to live under the government of worse men."


Parties are always beset by temptations. They are tempted to adopt repressive measures against their own members, or unscrupulous measures against their opponents. They are tempted to carry their controversies to such a pitch that the State may be paralysed in time of peace, or overthrown in time of war. Yet anyone who has had experience of practical politics in a democratic State can see no alternative to the party system; so that the aim should be, not to abolish parties, nor yet to abandon democracy because of their defects and dangers, but rather so to order affairs as to remove the defects and avoid the dangers.

We reach the general conclusion that liberty conduces to welfare, in its widest sense. Happy are the people who are fitted, and able, to enjoy liberty in all its

<sup>1</sup> "I believe that, without party, Parliamentary Government is impossible"—Disraeli—Speech at Manchester, *The Times*, 4 April, 1872.

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forms together. They will not deny that crises may come when one kind of liberty has to be subordinated for the sake of another. But they will need clear proof of it before they will consent to so great a sacrifice.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE NATION AND THE WORLD

WHEN we enter the province of the relations between States, we seem to be walking into a mist. Men are unable to see things clearly, as they are. Philosophers and historians, poets and politicians, generation after generation have shrouded the whole scene with clouds of metaphysical mystical vapour. Our thought is bewildered. In books, in ordinary conversation, it is usual to speak of the course of events as though it were due, not to men's action or inaction, but to some undefined shadowy "trend", or "force", or "destiny".

To give some instances —the former Crown Prince of Germany, in his *Memoirs*, speaks of the year 1914 as a time "when the enormous pressure of economic and political forces was uncontrollably driving the world towards the catastrophe of war." Sir Austen Chamberlain, writing of the difficulties of British politics in the same year, says, "Relentless Fate, as in a Greek tragedy, seemed driving us all to a catastrophe . . . The actors were in the grip of forces stronger than themselves, whirled round and downwards like frail craft caught in the maelstrom of inexorable fate." Lord Grey of Fallodon wrote, in his *Twenty-five Years*, "There is in great affairs so much more, as a rule, in the minds of the events (if such an expression may be used) than in the minds of the chief actors." The same idea is constantly found in literature. Thomas Hardy's great epic, *The Dynasts*, is founded on it.

Tolstoi's *War and Peace* ends with the same theme. John Buchan writes in his *Oliver Cromwell* "The last act of the drama had come, and events marched with a tragic speed. The different protagonists acted according to their types, puppets in the hands of destiny." It is well known that Napoleon's mind was dominated by this belief. At the beginning of the Russian campaign he said, "I feel myself driven towards an end that I do not know. As soon as I shall have reached it, as soon as I shall become unnecessary, an atom will suffice to shatter me. Till then, not all the forces of mankind can do anything against me"—(and, led by that faith, he marched to disaster).

Greek thought was overshadowed by the notion of an all-pervading, all-powerful Necessity. In our own day the notion is resuscitated. Dr Oswald Spengler, in particular, sets out to revive it, as the basis for an interpretation of history and a philosophy of life. His monumental work, *The Decline of the West*, distinguished by the breadth of its learning and the brilliance of its style, has exercised a great influence in Germany, and some influence elsewhere.

Spengler constantly uses phrases such as "an inherent historic necessity". He attaches prime importance to "what is named by us 'conjuncture', 'accident', 'Providence', or 'Fate', by Classical man 'Nemesis', 'Ananke', 'Tyche' or 'Fatum', by the Arab 'Kismet'." He writes, with reference to the expansion of European Powers: "It is not a matter of choice—it is not the conscious will of individuals, or even that of whole classes or peoples that decides. The expansive tendency is a doom, something daemonic and immense, which grips, forces into service, and uses up the late

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mankind of the world-city stage,<sup>1</sup> willy-nilly, aware or unaware."

Many thinkers are captured by the resemblance of human institutions to living organisms. It is not only the State which is supposed to be alive, but whole civilizations. And since many civilizations have come to an end, the conclusion is drawn that each one of them passes through the biological stages that are common to all organisms, except the lowest. Spengler, again, is among these thinkers. "Every Culture", he says, using that word in the usual sense of a Civilization, "passes through the age-phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age . . . Cultures are organisms, and world-history is their collective biography. Morphologically, the immense history of the Chinese or the Classical Culture is the exact equivalent of the petty history of the individual man, or of the animal, or the tree, or the flower."

Some are attracted by geometrical analogies. This is one of the most usual forms that philosophies of history have taken. Thinkers among the Hindus have envisaged existence as circular—constantly recurring in cycles. Some writers have seen the movement of ideas as a spiral, or as "a circular motion in which the radius grows longer." The optimists of the nineteenth century conceived the story of man as movement along a line, more or less straight and always ascending. Professor Arnold Toynbee, in his great work, *A Study of History*, detects a constantly recurring process of "withdrawal and return". He sees the succession of civilizations as "particular beats of a general rhythmical

<sup>1</sup> Spengler's term for an industrial civilization.



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pulsation which runs all through the Universe ” For him the fortunes of various sections of mankind move in a kind of zig-zag <sup>1</sup>

It is important that we should form an opinion whether there is truth in the idea which is common to all these theories namely that, no matter what men as individuals may think or do or not do, there is a mystic force that decides their fate for good or ill, according to some rule—metaphysical or biological or geometrical. This is not the same as the theistic faith that the hand of God guides the fortune of man It is a claim to have discovered, usually by an empirical study of recorded history, that there are principles, of one kind or of another, which have determined its course, and which, rightly interpreted, would predict the future.

Is there any substance in this idea, or is there none ? I feel convinced that there is none.

Not one of these writers gives any definition, or even the vaguest indication, of the nature of the force that is invoked Spengler, being an intuitionist, denies any need to do so. “When in the present work”, he writes, “precedence is consistently given to Time, Direction and Destiny over Space and Causality, this must not be supposed to be the result of reasoned proofs It is the outcome of (quite unconscious) tendencies of life-feeling—the only mode of origin of philosophic ideas.” When he speaks of Destiny as “a doom, something daemonic and immense, which grips”, he does not describe or define; he merely uses the language of a resounding, but empty rhetoric.

A philosophic historian, having framed a theory

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vico's theory of Reflux

which is to serve as a clue to the whole story, finds it easy, from the masses of material at his hand, to discover examples that support it. Without consciously making a selection to suit his purpose, the instances that confirm his ideas leap to his eye; those that do not, are to him less conspicuous and seem less important; every rule has its exceptions, and these may be treated as exceptions. This is the easier if the historian holds the view expressed by Spengler that "Nature is to be handled scientifically, History poetically."

With regard to the theory that every State, or Empire, or civilization, passes through the morphological stages of an organism—birth, growth, maturity, decay and death—by what acts of historical violence could this be reconciled with, for example, the vicissitudes of the history of China, or the growth of a system like the *British Empire*? How can it include the effects of such momentous events as the rise of the several world-religions; the development of ocean transit; the discovery of America, or the emergence of Japan?

Among the geometrical theories, what basis, even the slightest, is there for the dogma of Hindu theology that all things move in a circle? Does any impartial student feel convinced by the proofs offered in support of the straight line, the spiral or the zig-zag?

When Grey, with a half-apology, speaks of "the minds of the events—if such an expression may be used," it must be answered that it is legitimate to use it only as the merest figure of speech, without implying any philosophical content. For events do not possess minds. When Spengler uses the word "*Destiny*" throughout the thousand pages of his volumes, he

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might as well have written "Abracadabra" for any meaning that the word conveys.

Rather may we see the pattern of human history as an immense criss-cross of causes producing effects, which are themselves the causes of future effects, and so on continuously. Some of the factors are large and obvious and are recorded in history; most are trivial and casual; but of these some may have momentous consequences.<sup>1</sup> The complexity of the process is so vast that no single rule or simple image can possibly express it. Here and there we can distinguish particular causes as tending, if allowed to operate more or less in isolation, to produce particular effects. So we may sometimes trace similarities in the histories of the several nations or civilizations, may draw lessons from the experience, and predict for the future like consequences from like conditions. But isolation is rare; the differences are as many as the resemblances. Only omniscience could trace back the innumerable threads as they have come out of the past from this side or that, twisting, dividing, merging into one another, separating again. Only omniscience could unravel them. But they do not become non-existent because they are for us unravelled.

<sup>1</sup> Mr John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir) has published an interesting lecture under the title *The Causal and the Casual in History*. He gives a number of illustrations of trifling occurrences being followed by great consequences. But the casual occurrence is also causal; it is one among a number of causes which have contributed to the event. It could not have produced the consequence by itself, any more than the accidental pulling of a trigger could kill a man unless the gun were loaded and the man in the line of fire. No true distinction is to be drawn between a causal and a casual in history.

Running like a warp all through are the physical characteristics of the earth on which we live—its sea and land, climates and seasons; its conditions of weather and harvests, of earthquakes, pests, diseases. There are the qualities of man himself—body, mind and character; constant in the main, but modifiable in detail; with innumerable variations in races, nations, persons. There are the customs, institutions, and laws that he has made, his conflicts and his co-operations. There is the influence of great leaders of thought and action; of lesser leaders, and of ordinary men and women in their own spheres. All this vast complex is moving in space-time, and interweaving the infinitely variegated pattern of occurrence and circumstance.

We cannot grasp it all, so we do not understand why things happen. Because of our ignorance we speak of Destiny. There is a void, and we try to fill it with an abstraction. But ignorance is negative, and you cannot turn it into a positive by calling it Destiny. The positive is the continuous succession of intermingling causes, with effects that are further causes. "Fate", said Emerson, "is unpenetrated causes."

"Mankind" also is an unreality. Individuals make up the real. "Mankind?" said Goethe. "It is an abstraction. There are, always have been, and always will be, men and only men." The prophets, the teachers, the poets, the warriors, the statesmen—they and those who follow them, citizens or soldiers or workmen, voting or not voting, fighting or refusing to fight, producing things, buying them, using them; the millions of ordinary men and women, unnamed and unknown, forming opinions, one by one thinking and acting, or acting without thinking—they, and they alone,

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are the "spirit of the age", "the uncontrollable forces", "the minds of the events"; they, and they alone, decide the fate of nations and the history of man.

Was it "Destiny", or was it men, that gave to each of the centuries of modern Europe its special character—Renaissance and Reformation, the Age of Reason and Age of Freedom; that painted pictures, carved statues, wrote treatises, preached sermons, harangued crowds, took up arms; or invented engines and built factories, abolished slavery and established democracies?

Philosophies of Destiny, claiming to be the last word of modernity, are three hundred years out of date. They are a throw-back to scholasticism. Francis Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, cut away, once for all, the very foundations for such systems.

The Marxist interpretation of history is not on the same lines as these. It also speaks of "necessity", of "the inevitable", but it rests on nothing mystic. Karl Marx believed that there were factors at work within the modern capitalist system, visible, growing and certain to grow, which would necessarily bring about an economic crisis, followed by revolution and the downfall of the system itself. Whether his analysis was right or wrong, it was certainly not a denial of the principle of causality; it was an emphatic affirmation.

A prophecy, well-founded or ill-founded, once it is accepted by others, becomes itself a factor in deciding the course of events. History is full of instances of prophecies helping to bring about their own fulfilment; faith in the prophecy is a stimulus to its accomplishment. The strange story of the Jewish people, particularly in relation to Palestine, is a striking example.

Recent events in Russia have furnished another. When the socialist revolution announced by Marx did not come of itself, many of his disciples, at the beginning of the present century, became impatient. Stalin, then living in his native Transcaucasia, was among these. One of his biographers says that Stalin felt that "history must be given a shove", and therefore began his revolutionary activities.<sup>1</sup> All through the stages prior to the Russian revolution of 1917, during its crisis, and in the years that have followed, the prophecy itself was one of the chief causes of its own realization.<sup>2</sup>

In the same way a belief that a war in Europe is "inevitable", if sufficiently widely held, will itself help to make it so. Those who have once expressed that opinion will no longer strenuously resist such tendencies towards war as there may be. Militarists will say "this is what we always foretold"; anti-militarists will feel themselves in the grip of necessity.

Lord Grey of Fallodon mentions in his memoirs that, in 1893, when he was Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at a moment of severe tension between

<sup>1</sup> Compare an observation by Georges Sorel—"One could say of Lenin that he wishes, like Peter the Great, to force history—using the word 'force' in much the same sense as gardeners use it."

<sup>2</sup> "We suggest", say Sidney and Beatrice Webb, "that the future historian will attribute to the belief in the inevitability of the proletarian revolution no small part of the remarkable success of the upheaval which Lenin so persistently advocated, and, at the correct moment, so energetically led. In the eighteen years that have elapsed since the seizure of power, it has been, more than anything else, the popular acceptance of this conception of the inevitability of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' that has enabled the successors of Lenin in the government not only to maintain their power but also to overcome so many of their difficulties."

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Great Britain and France over questions relating to Siam, one of the most influential persons in the political world had expressed the view "that it was evident that war between ourselves and France must come, and that it would be better to have it at once." Had Grey and his colleagues shared that view the two countries would have been plunged into a sanguinary and ruinous conflict, on the ground that war was in any case "inevitable", whereas the actual course of events has conclusively proved that it was not.

Those who are oppressed by the belief in Destiny, in uncontrollable forces driving the world to war, are like a man in a nightmare. He feels himself spell-bound and helpless in the presence of looming catastrophe. Some vague, colossal Shape is advancing upon him. He cannot move, cannot run, or raise his hands; he cannot utter a cry of horror or a call for help. In an agony of terror he awakes—and finds there is nothing there.

When men have rid themselves of this pseudo-philosophic incubus, they see clearly that everything depends upon their own individual decisions and actions. From this the principle clearly emerges that there can be no division between State morality and personal morality.

The Hegelian State stood outside the sphere of ordinary ethics and was held to be free from all customary moral restrictions<sup>1</sup>. But when that myth dissolves, no room is left for any second morality. State morality is personal morality collectivized. If it is wrong for one

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Croce: "Politics, like economics, has its own laws, independent of morals."

man to assault his neighbour, it is equally wrong, and for precisely the same reasons, for millions of men together, under the name of their State, to assault the neighbouring millions bearing the name of another State.

The peril of the modern world springs largely from the wide-spread belief that it is right for the individual to support action by his country which for himself would be wrong. This belief is dignified as "a sense of realism". Name it "realism" and any wickedness becomes allowable.

In the monarchical and feudal system of the Middle Ages there was responsibility, clearly resting upon persons. There were Kings and Barons; they had consciences, however faulty, they could be influenced in some degree by the Church, by the hope of divine rewards and the fear of divine penalties. Church and conscience failed frequently enough; but religious duty was at least recognized, and sometimes fulfilled. In the modern world responsibility is so diffused that it often evaporates and disappears. Until a sense of personal responsibility is re-established, among statesmen and among citizens, the world will not be safe. To discard superhuman political fictions is the first step to that.

History may be handled poetically, as Spengler says, but it must be handled scientifically as well. History has value as art, and it has value also as science. It inspires literature with romance, it is a pageant, a drama with real characters; it weaves tapestries, figured with heroes and saints and sages, to cover the bare walls of our habitation, giving us a sense of warmth and comradeship, and stirring emulation. But history is also



a record of human experience, indispensable to the statesman, the economist and the moralist. We learn the history of the past so that we may make the history of the future. "History", said Thucydides, "is philosophy teaching by examples"

The record has to be used with caution. History repeats itself, but only when the conditions are the same; and they seldom are. Nothing is more dangerous than trying to "read the future from the mirror of the past." Nevertheless history collects materials from which sociology may often draw useful conclusions. It has been well said that these two are indispensable to one another. "history without sociology is 'literary' and unscientific, while sociology without history is apt to become mere abstract theorizing" Ethics also, as we have seen, must rely on the annals of experience in finding what it is that conduces to welfare and what hinders it, in determining right and wrong.

Accurate records of the past are therefore essential for our generation, and of the present for the generations that will come after us. Without careful statistics and impartial history the peoples have no chance of learning what the results of past experience have really been. Those, therefore, who think it right deliberately to falsify history, and, for the sake of some political or ostensibly religious motive, teach in the schools accounts of the past that are untrue, commit the worst of crimes against humanity. Ignorant of the facts, misled by distorted evidence, the new generations can hardly fail to form wrong judgements, wrong judgements must necessarily lead to wrong policies, there is no limit to the disasters which wrong policies may entail upon mankind.

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The criss-cross of historical causes has woven the pattern of mankind as it stands to-day. The principle of nationality has played a chief part in the process, and plays a chief part now in the politics of the world.

Nationality is to be accepted, not because the principle prevails and is powerful, but because reason may hold it to be beneficial.

The individual needs the support and stimulus of some social unit larger and greater than the family or the neighbourhood, but not so vast and vague as the whole of humanity. He finds it in his nation. He shares in a language, a tradition, a culture, a State. Experience shows that the idea of country can stir the strongest feelings of love and enthusiasm. Rightly directed, it always has been, and is now, a powerful incentive to effort and self-sacrifice.

The world is too large to be ruled, under existing conditions, as one State. If only for convenience of government it must be divided into political units. That being so, each unit should be of such a kind that personal service is enlisted, and cohesion and stability are maintained. Patriotism can accomplish that. Nationality is the basis for patriotism.

Further, variety is good for its own sake. If all peoples were amalgamated into a single type, the world would be the poorer. Different characteristics have developed from different origins and histories, and it is fortunate that they still endure. If not harmful in themselves, they are to be cherished. Nationality is the chief preservative of distinctive qualities and customs, arts and crafts, institutions and literatures, and so enriches mankind.

Since national morality is nothing else than collective

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personal morality the conduct of nations may only be guided by the same motives as the conduct of persons. It must be guided by both egoism and altruism, in such proportions and so balanced as will best conduce to welfare. The nation has duties to itself, as the individual has duties to himself, it is right to seek its own well-being, and to maintain its own interests. But, like the individual, the nation has duties to others. Neither altruism alone nor egoism alone is the right guide, whether for a person as member of a community, or for a people as member of the comity of nations.

But the notion that altruism should have any place at all in international affairs is often, perhaps usually, regarded as visionary. The morality of primitive man was on a tribal basis, and it persists. Anthropologists tell us that "among uncivilized races intra-tribal theft is carefully distinguished from extra-tribal theft. Whilst the former is forbidden, the latter is commonly allowed, and robbery committed on a stranger is an object of praise" Even Roman Law, and in its most developed form, took no account of peoples beyond the frontiers. Within the Empire, all men, if they were free, had become citizens and enjoyed their rights; outside it, all were "barbarians and enemies" Similar ideas, changed in form but not in spirit, survive into the modern world. "All cannot be happy at once," said Sir Thomas Browne in his *Religio Medici*, "for the glory of one state depends upon the ruin of another" And Voltaire expressed the view current in his time when he said, "Such is the condition of human affairs, that to wish for the greatness of one's own country, is to wish for the harm of its neighbours"

This doctrine develops into the conscious philosophy

of militarism. "Always without exception," said Fichte, "the most civilized State is the most aggressive." Treitschke, for many years a professor of great influence in the University of Berlin, wrote, "War will endure to the end of history. The laws of human thought and of human nature forbid any alternative, neither is one to be wished for." In recent years Herr Hitler wrote in his *Mein Kampf*: "That this world will in future be subject to the severest struggles for the existence of mankind cannot be doubted. In the end, the urge for self-preservation is eternally victorious. Before it, the so-called humanitarianism, which is merely a compound of stupidity, cowardice and arrogance, melts like snow in the March sunshine. In constant struggle mankind has become great—in eternal peace it must perish." Signor Mussolini's repeated declarations are well known: "Fascism does not believe in the possibility, or the utility, of perpetual peace. . . . War alone brings to their maximum tension all human energies and stamps the seal of nobility on those peoples which have the virtue to face it . . . . We are becoming, and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire, a military nation, a militaristic nation, I will add. . . ." So all through the future centuries of human history, armies are to march, young men in thousands are to kill and maim each other, battleships are to be sunk with their crews, cities are to be bombed from the air, men, women and children are to be suffocated by poison-gas, burnt in incendiary fires; blown to pieces—all in order to prove the greatness of the ideals of the nations that are engaged and to stamp upon them "the seal of nobility". If modern civilization goes the way of the Roman, its

decline and fall will be due to the attacks, not of barbarians from without, but of more dangerous barbarians within.

Examine the arguments that seek to justify war as a permanent institution of human society, and it will soon be apparent how specious they are.

“Men are by nature fighting animals; there always have been wars and always will be; human nature does not change.” That depends upon what is meant by human nature. If those characteristics which appear not to have changed are termed collectively human nature, and those that have changed are not taken into account, then there is obvious support for the saying. But since many characteristics have in fact changed, it carries us no farther. Essentially we are back at our discussion on the relations between instinct and reason. Reason itself is as much a part of human nature as instinct. Reject reason, and every step from savagery to civilization might have been declared impossible as contrary to human nature. There is no ground on which to believe that international warfare is an ordinance of nature any more than inter-tribal theft.

The perversion of the principle of evolution reappears. General von Bernhardi expressed in clear terms a view that has been wide-spread. “Wherever we look in nature we find that war is a fundamental law of development. This great verity, which has been recognized in past ages, has been convincingly demonstrated in modern times by Charles Darwin. He proved that nature is ruled by an unceasing struggle for existence, by the right of the stronger, and that this struggle in its apparent cruelty brings about a selection eliminating

the weak and the unwholesome." It is easy to see, however, that the conflicts between peoples are by no means of the same order as the competition between species. War, in the modern world, does not exterminate. Not even a Fichte or a Treitschke would say that the ideal nation would be one that set out physically to destroy the others and to replace them. Consider the many wars that have been waged in Europe and Asia during the last hundred years: which of them bears any resemblance to the replacement of one species by another through nature's struggle for existence? So far as war has any biological effect, it is rather to kill off the fittest than to preserve them. Both in the victorious and in the defeated peoples, thousands, or may be millions, of the strongest and bravest are eliminated from the national stock. Let this beneficent process be repeated often enough, and populations of women, old men and weaklings would be left, to prove the value of war in promoting virility. It is well to remember also that co-operation as much as competition plays a part in the evolutionary process. "I could adduce from the writings of Darwin himself," says Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, "and from those of later naturalists, a thousand instances taken from the animal kingdom in which success has come about by means analogous with the cultivation of all the peaceful arts, the raising of the intelligence, and the heightening of the emotions of love and pity."

"War", it is said again, "evokes supreme efforts, unlimited self-sacrifice, great qualities of heroism, it gives an impetus to efficiency and stirs nations out of their sloth." This, no doubt, is true. But what is the cost? The measureless suffering, anguish of mind, devastating

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ruin, which belong to modern war, far outweigh any such advantages. We do not set fire to our houses or wreck our ships so that the firemen or the life-boatmen may show their bravery. And is there no alternative way to evoke the virtues? The eras of peace have not been the least fruitful in material and intellectual and moral achievements. "Thanks be to Heaven," said Victor Hugo, "peoples are great apart from the sinister adventures of the sword"

Behind and beneath these justifications of war, many of those who are ardent in the cause of social progress suspect that there lies another, an unavowed motive. Those among the possessing classes who are moved by sheer self-interest may see without regret the energies of the industrial masses diverted from economic questions at home to political questions abroad.

Therefore, my Harry,  
Be it thy course to busy giddy minds  
With foreign quarrels

Perhaps this influence, almost unconsciously, may be quietly and constantly at work. Property, needing an ally against poverty, may sometimes see it in a militaristic patriotism

The enlightened opinion of mankind rejects these pleas and resists these influences. It condemns war as an evil. It seeks to eliminate it from among the recognized institutions of the civilized world. If that were not so, why should the governments of sixty-three out of the sixty-eight nations, including all the principal

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Powers, have signed the Briand-Kellogg Pact—the Pact of Paris ?<sup>1</sup> Ten years after the end of the Great War, the rulers of the world made this declaration: “Deeply sensible of their solemn duty to promote the welfare of mankind; persuaded that the time has come when a frank renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy should be made . . .; convinced that all changes in their relations with one another should be sought only by pacific means and be the result of a peaceful and orderly process . . . The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare, in the names of their respective peoples, that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another. The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts, of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, shall never be sought except by pacific means.”

Yet, in spite of that pronouncement, so universal and so unqualified, the danger of war persists. Throughout the continent of Europe, and in some countries outside Europe, youth is still being trained to warfare, formidable armaments are being accumulated at a most oppressive cost; sudden gas attacks from the air being looked upon as possible, civil populations are being taught how to protect themselves against them. There is a sense of constant strain. It is hallucination to believe that statesmen and peoples are paralysed in presence of some irresistible, superhuman force that may sweep them to disaster; but the danger that they

<sup>1</sup> The States which in 1937 are not adherents are—Argentina, Bolivia, Salvador, Uruguay, Yemen



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themselves are to each other is no hallucination. If "Necessity" is only a nightmare, militarism is a waking fact. The life of our times is overshadowed by the fear of war, so that youth is no longer light-hearted nor old age serene.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### CONDITIONS OF PEACE

To set Peace against Patriotism, as though they were opposites, would be a wrong policy. Love of country is good in itself, since it serves welfare, and it is a motive so powerful that to antagonize it would be harmful. Rather should we make it clear that peace is an essential part of patriotism. It is not true that "to wish for the greatness of one's own country is to wish for the harm of its neighbours." On the contrary, the level of civilization anywhere depends upon the level everywhere, and each country prospers best in a prosperous world. Egoism, unbalanced by altruism, reacts to the disadvantage of a State as of an individual. A country which ruthlessly pursues only its own aggrandizement invites a general hostility, "he who makes many afraid of him has himself many to fear"; the statesman who wins friends for his country is the best patriot.

Experience shows that there are three principles, the observance of which has helped to preserve peace, and the breach to cause war.

The first is the juridical equality of large and small States. "The proposition", says Maine, "that independent communities, however different in size and power, are all equal in the view of the law of nations has largely contributed to the happiness of mankind". It is indeed the essential basis for any law among nations. That the greater States should exercise a greater influence in determining the course of world

affairs, proportionate to their larger populations and resources, will be granted. But unless there is equal status in the eye of the law between great and small, as there is in the ordinary courts between rich and poor, justice disappears; and then, as St Augustine said, "What are your empires but brigandage and rapine?"

The second principle is that each State must abstain from interference in the domestic affairs of others. This also is an application of the rules of personal ethics to the comity of nations. We have found that it is best to tolerate our neighbours' opinions and actions, however much we may disapprove of them, provided that they cause no nuisance. Non-intervention is the equivalent in international politics to toleration in private life.

The force of example, and the influence of general opinion, may have an effect in the one case as in the other. The success of democracy in some States may lead others to become democratic, or its failure send them to a different system. The opinion of mankind influences events within national frontiers; knowledge of it will gradually percolate to the people, however much despotic rulers may try to shut it out. And such influence is not only legitimate, but necessary. Just as toleration need not imply indifference, so non-intervention need not involve silence. The moral influence of Great Britain and France gave a powerful support to the Greeks and the Italians in their struggles for national freedom, and the present generation has seen other examples.

But when political propaganda is deliberately carried on by the government of one State within the territory

of another—whether directly or indirectly, by agents or through subsidies—that is a form of aggression; and not less to be resented because it may be invisible and intangible. While the Bolshevik régime in Russia was being attacked by the White armies after the Revolution, it may have been legitimate for it, as a measure of defence, to try to stir up discontent within the territories and empires of its enemies, but the continuance of the communist propaganda after peace had been restored, under the direction and backed by the resources of the Russian State, has been one of the principal causes of the unrest of the post-War period. The reaction that it evoked helped, not only to defeat its own direct purpose,<sup>1</sup> but also to bring into being the anti-Russian militarist bloc, which, in its turn, has become one of the chief factors in the dangerous tension in Europe. Similarly with Nazi or Fascist propaganda designed to influence the domestic politics of other States.

The only safe rule must be that the people of each country are alone responsible for their own internal affairs. If they feel themselves unfitted to work a democratic system with success, or, conversely, if they prefer democracy to Communism or Fascism, that is their own concern. If the choice proves to be wrong, it is the people themselves who will suffer and it is for them to change it. Neighbours will watch and learn. They have the right only to ask that they too shall be left alone to pursue their own course in their own way.

<sup>1</sup> Mr and Mrs Webb write "We cannot help thinking that . . . the avowed interference of Moscow in the internal affairs of other countries actually militates, by the nationalist resentment that it creates, against the progress of communism itself."

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The third principle necessary to peace is the observance of treaties. Nations cannot live harmoniously together unless they are able to trust each other's undertakings; just as merchants cannot trade unless they can rely upon contracts. It is obvious to everyone that the present feeling of insecurity in the world springs largely from loss of faith in the value of treaties. Men say everywhere—"What, after all, is the use of international undertakings, however universal, solemn or emphatic? What does it matter whether diplomatists are able to arrange agreements for this or for that, if, as soon as they become inconvenient to one party or another, they are likely to be ignored? After the lessons of the Great War, after the experience of Abyssinia, is it safe to believe that, in great matters, there exists any law at all among nations? The only wise course for every country is to protect itself with armaments up to the limit of its resources, since no one can trust his neighbour's word"

This, without question, is one of the central issues of our time. But I do not think that the right moral has been drawn from the lessons of the Great War. It is true that they proved that, under stress, treaties may become mere "scraps of paper". The outcome showed, however, that that policy may bring to those who follow it, not advantage, but disaster.

Within the British Cabinet, at the end of July and the beginning of August 1914, it was the German invasion of Belgium which was, for many of the Ministers, the deciding factor. Great Britain was under no legal obligation of any kind to come to the assistance of France against Germany. The British Government had taken pains, in the Grey-Cambon correspondence

of 1912, to put that fact upon record beyond possibility of misunderstanding, and to obtain for it the formal acknowledgement of the Government of France. At no moment during the crisis did the French Government suggest that any such obligation existed. On the questions whether some moral obligation arose, or whether British interests demanded, in any case, that the course taken by Germany should be resisted, opinions differed. It may be that in any event, either at the outset or later, Great Britain would have entered the War. But this much is certain. if Germany had not broken the treaty by which she had herself guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, and if Belgium had not maintained her own obligation to defend it and appealed to Great Britain to fulfil her share in the guarantee, there would not have been the unity of spirit and the strength of action that in fact prevailed. In the event only two members of the Cabinet resigned, representing no large body of public opinion. Had the Belgian issue not arisen, the Government, which was as a body intensely averse in principle from all war, would have been deeply divided on the particular issue. That division would have represented a similar division in Parliament, among the British people and throughout the British Empire; a violent controversy would have arisen; there would have been lacking the promptitude of action, the enthusiasm of enlistment, the immense effort in the production of munitions, which were displayed, and military events, in Flanders, in France and elsewhere, would have taken a different course. It was the feeling that we were helping to vindicate the public law of Europe, on the sanctity of which, we believed, the whole future welfare of mankind depended, that

united, at the crucial moment, the British Cabinet; made the peoples of Great Britain and the Dominions as nearly unanimous as democracies can ever be; and brought to the opponents of Germany that accession of strength in men and resources which, from the beginning, foretold the end.

Again, two years later, it was the fact that, in the judgement of the United States, the rulers of Germany had broken the Law of Nations by the deliberate sinking of merchant and passenger-vessels by submarines, that led her, reluctantly, into the War; and it was the despatch of her great armies to the Western Front which made hopeless the valiant efforts of the German people, and brought on the final collapse

Broadly viewed, the Great War showed in the face of history that the flagrant breach of treaties, while it may not be decisive, can sometimes evoke so powerful a moral reaction in the world as to entail a penalty as heavy as it is just. That this did not occur in the case of the Italian aggression against Abyssinia—or rather, that the penalty incurred was not sufficient to be a deterrent—is indeed one of the chief reasons for the present loss of faith in international agreements, from which the peoples of all countries, Italy included, are now suffering

World opinion does not seem to view in the same light the German repudiation of the disarmament clauses in the Treaty of Versailles. It is recognized that an undertaking had been given by the Allies that German disarmament was to be followed by a general disarmament—an undertaking, though not in treaty form, that was definite and morally binding. Years had gone by; it was not fulfilled; there was no sign of

fulfilment It could not be expected that a great and proud nation could consent indefinitely to remain unarmed, impotent and without influence, in the midst of heavily armed all-powerful neighbours. If, after the Napoleonic Wars, the Allied Powers at the Congress of Vienna had imposed upon France similar terms, for similar reasons and on similar conditions, no one can now believe that they would have held. However much opinion may condemn the method and the manner of the German repudiation, no one can candidly say that it was without justification. ✓

Nevertheless, the events of the Great War, the blunt discarding by Germany of obligations under the Peace Treaty, the Italian aggression upon Abyssinia, together with the Japanese aggression upon China, have profoundly shaken faith in the value of treaties. There have indeed been many instances in which, during recent years, nations have strictly conformed to their obligations, have accepted the intervention of the League of Nations, or the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice, and have agreed to settlements in disputes, some of which in earlier days would have been likely to lead to war. But these have not been enough to maintain confidence. The question, therefore, now before mankind—vital to all the future—is this: by what means, if at all, can that confidence be restored?

Again and again in the course of human history efforts have been made to establish some system which would prevent or repress the recurring conflicts between peoples, and allow mankind to live decently and in peace. The Roman Empire was such a system, it



recognized, with Seneca, that " every man is born into two communities. the cosmopolis and his native city ", for some centuries the Empire achieved a large measure of success. The Catholic Church, inspired by its religious mission, sought the same end. The Holy Roman Empire sought it too, Dante eloquently propounded its ideal in his *De Monarchia*. In the nineteenth century there was the so-called Holy Alliance, and afterwards the Concert of Europe, which tried intermittently to reconcile conflicting interests so as to preserve the peace. In our own day, goaded into action by the terrible experience of the Great War, the statesmen of the world have made another attempt, more universal in its scope and more elaborate in its methods than any of the others, to end the anarchy that has been so plainly disastrous, and a League of Nations has come to life.

The League has had to confront the most formidable difficulties, owing to the prevalence of the militarist philosophy among the rulers of three of the Great Powers, Germany, Italy and Japan, their scepticism as to the purposes of the League, and their coolness towards its efforts. Not less serious has been the aloofness, for wholly different reasons, of a fourth, the United States. Nevertheless the League, within a period of less than twenty years, has achieved a record of successes, in many spheres, which should earn the warmest gratitude for those who have worked in its service. It would be a tragedy at all costs to be avoided, if this latest and greatest effort to safeguard the best interest of the human race were to end in the same failure as all those which have preceded it.



## CONDITIONS OF PEACE

In presence of the imminent danger and the urgent need, how is it possible that many of the men in the places of power, instead of seeking with one mind to work together to avert disaster and to open an era of beneficent development, should posture, and menace and revile, should praise war as a bracing exercise, load the peoples with armaments and taxes, and in the name of patriotism—or of destiny—should reject the way of peace and life and choose the road to death ?  
✓

Man, proud man,  
    . . . like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As make the angels weep

In order to restore faith in treaties, and so give some chance of establishing order in the world, it is clearly necessary to preserve the League of Nations and to enlarge its membership. But it is necessary also to expand its functions

The friends of peace have long been accustomed to say that the aim must be to substitute Law for War. Disputes between individuals are decided, as a matter of course, in the law-courts, disputes between nations, unless settled by negotiation or conciliation, should be decided by arbitration or judicial award. And just as the judgements of the law-courts are enforced by the civil police, so, they say, international judgements should be enforced, if need be, by international sanctions—economic or even military

The first of these objects has so far been attained that a complete arbitral and juridical system has gradually been built up. It is at the service of any who wish to

## BELIEF AND ACTION

use it. It is in fact constantly being used year by year. And there has not yet been a single case in which the award of an international court of arbitration or of law has not been accepted and applied.

On the side of enforcement the progress has been small and the prospects are not bright. The Covenant of the League of Nations has its article on Sanctions, but it has been applied only once, and then without success. Whether it is desirable, or would be possible in any near future, to empower the League to call upon its members for armies and fleets and air-squadrons, in order to enforce its decisions when they are defied, is a question on which there is a deep division of opinion. Many believe that, if such a step were taken before the time was fully ripe, it would bar all possibility of making complete the membership of the League; and, further, would be likely, in a time of crisis, to cause such dissension, even among the existing members, as might bring about the dissolution of the League itself.

None the less it is becoming clear that the League is at present inadequate for its high task, not only because four out of the seven great Powers are either outside it, or in it but not of it, and not only because there is no coercive strength behind it; but also for a third reason, perhaps even more important than either of those.

When we use the analogy of private disputes, and say that, among nations as among individuals, not the will and the force of the parties, but the law and police of the community should decide, we are apt to forget that the judiciary and the executive are not the only organs of a State: there is also the legislature. It is not only a matter of interpreting the law and enforcing it; there is

also the making of laws and their amendment. If some class of citizens, who were keenly dissatisfied with some feature in the existing state of things, were merely to be told that the law-courts were open to them and that the police force would enforce any judgement given in their favour, they could not be content with that. Their grievance is against the substance of the laws themselves, and not the interpretation. They need to be assured that, if their view is right and can gain a general support, the law can be altered. But if, whenever a class was dissatisfied, the answer had to be that no authority existed with the power and the will ever to change the laws, then private violence or armed revolution would be left as the only resource. It has been well said that "world-law can never be a substitute for world-policy."

The League of Nations is like a State equipped with an admirable judiciary, but with neither an effective executive nor a legislature actively discharging the functions that are needed. Of those two deficiencies the last is at least as important as the other. For the consequence is that the League appears as no more than the guardian of things as they are. It can take action to decide disputes on the meaning or the application of existing law, but does not in fact take action in order to make changes in the law itself. So those who approve the *status quo* support the League, and those who disapprove are alienated. By long and intense effort the friends of peace have secured the creation of the great international judiciary, many of them are framing plans for the provision of executive power; but few, as yet, have come to close terms with the question of a legislature.

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The Treaty of Versailles bred resentments. Observers who were familiar with the strained conditions in Europe before 1914 must recognize that the Treaty removed far more injustices than it caused; yet some new injustices were created, and they feed the appetites that make for war.

The question of colonies also arises. The Treaty did not lessen, it greatly increased the inequalities, which had arisen in the course of history, in the ownership of the land-surface of the globe. Apart from the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and the Italian occupation of Abyssinia, eight countries or Empires now control two-thirds of the whole; <sup>1</sup> the other sixty must remain content with the one-third that is left. They are not all content. There is a sense of wounded prestige, where colonies had been won and developed and then lost by war. There are economic anxieties, a feeling of cramped space, of standards of living unnecessarily lowered.

It is not surprising that some of the States, which are not among the fortunate eight, should be dissatisfied with the existing conditions. It is not to be wondered at if they see the League of Nations—applying inter-

<sup>1</sup> British Empire	14 million square miles
Soviet Russia	8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " " "
French Empire	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " " "
China	4 $\frac{1}{4}$ " " "
U S A	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ " " "
Belgium	930,000 " "
Portugal	850,000 " "
Holland	800,000 " "
Total . . . .	37 $\frac{1}{4}$ million square miles

Total land-area of the earth—55 $\frac{1}{2}$  million square miles

The area of Manchuria is 363,000 square miles, and of Abyssinia 350,000 square miles

national law, but a power to address or amend it, a judiciary with authority to enforce it, more than the guardian of what happens to be the *status quo*. We can understand that, in the Peace Conference, denounce those who could really be seen in conditions as war-mongers, though they appear to themselves as a lofty devotion to the cause of peace than as a wish to erect a convenient pseudo justification around the vast territories which have been torn in the past by warring wars themselves. Such a pseudo-system of international relations is the cure.

How the situation is to be met is a question for practical statesmanship. Whether the solution is to be found by some readjustment of sovereignties, or by an extension of the system of mandates, or by special economic agreements opening new opportunities for development of territories and purchase of commodities, or by a combination of these methods, is a matter for discussion and negotiation. The point of importance is to recognize that a situation exists which needs handling, which cannot be quietly ignored; that the League of Nations has the duty, not only to prevent, so far as it can, the use of violence for the redress of grievances, but also where grievances are real to provide other means of remedy.

But this whole process of European expansion—can it be regarded as at all consistent with any ethical scheme? On the principles that have been accepted, can we defend in any degree the continual annexations during the last four centuries, out of which has come the world-picture of to-day?

John Stuart Mill, in the course of his classic vindica-

tion of liberty for civilized peoples, made it quite clear that he thought it inapplicable to others. "We may leave out of consideration," he wrote, "those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage. The early difficulties in the way of spontaneous progress are so great, that there is seldom any choice of means for overcoming them; and a ruler full of the spirit of improvement is warranted in the use of any expedients that will attain an end, perhaps otherwise unattainable. Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion."

This might appear to be a specious excuse for a process in history which has been disgraced by many shameful episodes of cruelty, rapacity and oppression. But on the other hand, can it be contended that the welfare of mankind would have been served if, for example, the whole of America north of Mexico had been left to the half-million of Red Indians, who, before the Europeans came, were the only occupants, or the continent of Australia to the 150,000 Black-fellows who, in the eighteenth century, alone roamed over its vast solitudes?

New ideas of trusteeship, gradually developing into partnership, have done much to redeem the sordid ruthlessness of the early conquests. Quick and safe communications, and the diffusion of knowledge of each other's ways, have made possible a racial policy better

than a distant relationship of conqueror and subject Aristotle held that a State should not be so large that its citizens would be too many to hear the voice of a single herald. In the modern world, the radio-announcer is the herald; and his voice may reach to every corner of the globe. If such be the standard, the "Polis" of to-day may be world-wide.

The growing interdependence of mankind in economic production and trade, in art and science, may gradually transform the old Imperialisms, changing fundamentally their relationships both external and internal, and merging them into a new conception of humanity.

All these ideas, however, are rejected and derided by the militarist philosophy. Even the three root principles—equal status, non-intervention in domestic affairs and sanctity of treaties—are denied. Interdependence, whether in commerce or in culture, is depreciated, and a self-sufficient nationalism preferred. Peace is not accepted as necessary to welfare, or if it be, then welfare itself is repudiated as the ultimate aim. Typical of the whole school is the teaching of Treitschke. Lord Balfour made an analysis of his doctrine, and summed it up in these words: "The State, says Treitschke, is Power. Of so unusual a type is its power that it has no power to limit its power. Hence no treaty, when it becomes inconvenient, can be binding, hence the very notion of general arbitration is absurd, hence war is part of the Divine order. Small states must be contemptible because they must be weak; success is the test of merit, power is its reward; and all nations get what they deserve."



## BELIEF AND ACTION

So long as these notions are loose in the world—and they are not only let loose but are powerful in deciding the policy and action of great States—civilized people have to take steps to counter them. And since many of those who hold them declare themselves to be pursuing Action for its own sake, to be in revolt against reason and not open to argument, the rational world has to defend itself by other means than persuasion. Hence the lamentable necessity for the peace-loving democracies to divert the energies of their manhood, and the resources so urgently needed for other purposes, to their own armament. It is futile to point to the folly and mischief of the whole affair, and to say that sensible men, religious men, can take no part in it. The facts are there, not to be denied. It must be obvious to everyone that, if there were no force in the world except that which is in the hands of the militarists, the cause of peace would be in a bad way. “It is useless”, says Dr Inge, “for the sheep to pass resolutions in favour of vegetarianism, while the wolf remains of a different opinion”.

A great part of the world being still, internationally, in the stage of tribal morality, it is unavoidable that the peoples who value peace and freedom should accept the duty of countering aggressive force, if need be, by defensive force. Both the general interest and the individual interest, altruism as well as egoism, require it. For this reason, besides the others, patriotism is to be cherished as a virtue, and military valour is still required of the peace-loving citizens of the peaceable States.

But that cannot be the end. It is impossible for our age to rest there. The enormous burden of great

armaments, the chronic anxiety, the danger, sometimes more acute sometimes less, of another general war—all this is so obviously bad that the most active efforts of the best minds everywhere are called for in order to bring about a change. Nor need it be assumed that the prevalence of the militarist philosophy in certain countries must be accepted as something fixed and irremediable. Sooner or later the peoples of those countries also may realize the enormous mischief that these ideas are working to mankind at large and to themselves among the rest. However much their minds may be muffled and their actions stifled, gradually a mass opinion may be formed and make itself felt. If at the same time the democratic Powers show themselves ready to meet the grievances of the others where they are well-founded; if the League of Nations becomes a true World-Parliament, and does not sink into a mere agency for stereotyping the conditions of 1918 as the pattern for all time, if those who control two-thirds of the land-area of the earth recognize, not merely in words but in action, that they are trustees rather than irresponsible owners—then it may be that the present perils can be averted and the next generation be freed from the obsession that shadows our own.

America in these times gives the example to Europe. The work of the Pan-American Congresses, supplementing the long-established and unbroken friendship between the United States and Canada, and stimulated by President Roosevelt's policy of "the Good Neighbour", has helped to bring an atmosphere of calm and stability to the whole continent. Although friction may arise from time to time here and there, and

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although it is not long since two of the smaller States were locked together in a sanguinary and futile conflict. taken as a whole the present aspect of America. North and South, is an object-lesson of the falsity of the doctrine that war is natural to man and good sense powerless to control the dealings between nations

Since the great issue is not "on the lap of the gods", or to be decided by "destiny" or "the spirit of the age", but by the thoughts and acts of men—leaders and masses together—all depends upon whether it is the Will-to-Power or the Will-to-Peace that is to prevail among them. A military disarmament, simultaneous and general, is one of the principal objects to be sought,<sup>1</sup> but it has been well said that it must be preceded by "a disarmament of minds".

Here once more comes in the importance of religion. Pure reason is not enough. The piling-up of defensive armaments is not enough. The emotional appeal of an exaggerated nationalism must be countered by another emotional appeal, of a different kind. This can only be the appeal of humanitarian sympathy—what the Stoics called "the sympathy of the Whole", and religion may powerfully reinforce it.

There have been times and places, however, when religion, so far from countering, has been a chief support of violence and war. The early histories both of

<sup>1</sup> I heard M. Herriot at a meeting of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva make the observation "'To disarm' appears to be an irregular verb with no first person singular and only a future tense."

the Jews and the Moslems are examples. Even Christian theology has sometimes justified war as a permanent institution in the comity of nations. Francis Bacon was expressing a view commonly accepted in his day, and often before and since, when he spoke of wars as "the highest trials of right, when princes and states that acknowledge no superior upon earth shall put themselves upon the justice of God, for the deciding of their controversies by such success as it shall please Him to give on either side." We may find in the contradictory voices of religion one of the main causes of the blood-stained character of modern history—"the strange anomaly of Christian Europe, a society of nations all of which had accepted the religion of peace and brotherhood, with its universal ethics, yet which were constantly at war with one another."

The emphasis of religion was first laid upon the salvation of the individual soul; then, when the importance of social morality came to be recognized, it stressed the virtue also of social effort and sacrifice; now that there is urgent need for strengthening the foundations of an international morality, it is upon that as well that the religions are called upon to focus their action. The times demand a simultaneous, parallel movement by all the Churches everywhere to promote world-fellowship through religion.

Here again we see the urgency of the need for a reconciliation of the creeds. So long as there is \*mutual antagonism and acrimonious dispute there cannot be effective co-operation in a cause that is transcendent. Many paths lead to the same con-

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clusion The rehabilitation of religion, on a basis consistent with present knowledge, and the joint action by all Faiths for common ends—these are essential to the solution of the problems of our age.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### ACTION

If the men of these times are to march with clear eyes and sure step into the future, they must first emerge from the mental mists that now confuse them

It is essential that the religions should frankly accept the facts about the physical universe which knowledge has established, no longer putting orthodoxy into antagonism with truth; while science itself will reveal to us "a world charged with the grandeur of God".

Frankly let both religion and science accept the fact of evil as the necessary outcome of natural evolution and human liberty. A static universe might be free from evils, a race always under guidance might be free from evils; but not a world that changes and men that choose. In choosing we make mistakes, individually or collectively, and we suffer for it. But in the very sources of evil lie the grounds for hope. Because there is change and because there is choice, man has the chance to effect his own rescue, and often does so. Therefore pessimism is bad philosophy.

The individual may not shift his responsibilities on to "Destiny", nor yet on to God. Destiny is a figment, and the divine element in the world, as Plato held, is not coercive, but persuasive. If God were overtly active, constantly directing, man could be passive and nothing more. Because God is reticent, man has scope.

A belief that evolution ensures human progress is also a delusion. That is optimism, and it is as ill-founded as pessimism. Viewed on a scale of epochs we see that

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life advances, on the scale of decades or centuries human affairs may stand still or move backwards. Progress is not automatic, it is usually precarious. Yet we need not hold, on that account, that it is illusory or impossible.

All depends upon man's own action. It is right, therefore, to glorify action; but not any action, regardless of aim or method. Action for action's sake—like art for art's sake, or speed for speed's sake—is a creed that reduces life to the level of a game. To move for the sake of moving, without asking whither; to move faster and faster, without asking why; to hold that it is important to be vigorous and victorious, but not important to be right—this is a gospel that leads some men to futilities, others to ambition, violence and war, with disaster as the outcome.

“No one”, it has been said, “can walk backwards into the future”. But there have been periods when men have tried to do that. From the time of the Renaissance to the end of the eighteenth century the leaders of western thought looked back for guidance to Greece and Rome. Whenever theologians have been dominant life has been retrospective. Always men of cultivated mind are tempted to linger pleasantly with yesterday. We need all the knowledge of past experience, and all the stimulus of past inspiration, that we can get; but it is fatal to identify religion with religious history, philosophy with the classic philosophers, and thought with scholarship.

Let this age, then, take confidence in itself. It is too diffident. Ashamed of the Great War, angered by the course of events that followed it, recognizing its own bewilderment, the age has been ready to plead guilty to any accusation. If a school of economists says that

material factors rule events, we all confess ourselves materialists and the pursuit of wealth the aim of our social system. If a school of psychologists lays stress on primeval instincts in the determination of conduct, we see ourselves irredeemably primitive, and develop a crude sculpture and painting and a barbarous music to suit our sub-human characters. If dictators, or would-be dictators, proclaim that we are unfit to govern ourselves, we perceive all around us the faults of our democracies and forget their virtues

Perhaps a later age may form a different judgement. Perhaps our posterity may see in the Great War, not something sordid and mercenary, but—for all its fundamental folly—an episode that was in essence idealistic, a stupendous event, in which ten millions of men laid down their lives, not primarily for materialistic ends of any sort, but most of them for duty as they understood it, for patriotism, or liberty, or the vindication of law among nations; in which multitudes of ordinary men showed greater courage and endurance, in the face of greater perils, than had ever been recorded in the annals of mankind. Perhaps posterity may see this time as one of the formative ages in history, when science was effulgent, knowledge was diffused throughout the world and among all classes as never before, and an unprecedented effort was made to rid mankind of poverty and to spread the amenities of leisure and culture. Let us not be so ready to idealize past and future to the detriment of our own age, but rather show ourselves patriots of the present, declaring with Emerson,

Future or Past no richer secret folds,  
O friendless Present ! than thy bosom holds



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Welfare is the aim, and welfare consists not in one thing but in many. Intuition gives us our primary desires, reason confirms or discards, refines, enlarges. Experience tells us what will make for welfare and what will not, example and discussion, persuasion and law, define the ends and point the way. So there is built up, through the generations, a broad conception of welfare, comprising many varied elements, spiritual and intellectual, moral and material, social and personal.

This is the Good, which men should seek. Our thoughts and acts are right or wrong according to their consequences, the test being whether—directly or indirectly, soon or late—they serve welfare or hinder it.

Bringing these ideas with us, we come down from the heights of philosophy and religion into the broad plains of practical affairs. "To turn events into ideas is the function of literature", says Santayana, to turn ideas into events is the function of politics.

Action must be both individual and collective. As in physics we have the object and its field, and in biology the organism and its environment, so in politics we have the individual and the community, the nation and the world—acting and re-acting incessantly each on the other. Of deep importance, therefore, are our political institutions and our industrial systems—the form they are to take and the use that is made of them ✓

Nevertheless, in the last resort, it is the individual that matters, for all governments depend ultimately upon their peoples, all industries upon their managers and workmen. Pioneer thinkers and active leaders are no more than individuals, though they are the ones who matter most. They too depend upon their following, unless the units who make up the mass are sensible.

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and competent, bad thinkers and bad leaders will prevail and good ones be powerless

Welfare is the aim, individual action is the means, and liberty the condition. Liberty by itself is not enough. Men say that they are ready to die for the sake of liberty; but it is really for the sake of what liberty makes possible. Liberty is a negative concept, it is freedom from something—from alien rule, domestic tyranny, oppressive laws, the bonds of poverty. It is a removal of hindrances, but when the hindrances have been removed—what then? To establish liberty is not the end; it is only the beginning. It is the opening of a door; what matters is beyond.

Peace also is not an end in itself, it also is a condition—an indispensable condition for the pursuit of the aims that are positive. If liberty and peace are assured, then the individual man may seek his own fullest development and the perfecting of his own nature. As part of that he will co-operate with others to build up the great society. If it is asked what are the ends of action, we find them there.

Every age is inclined to think itself unique, but our own age knows that in one respect it is truly unique. Hitherto evolution has been unconscious. The animals, man also, have been the unwitting outcome of preceding conditions and of environment. But now—for the first time in all the millions of years in the earth's history—there exists a race of beings on the planet who have grasped something at least of the evolutionary process that governs the cosmos, looking backward and forward they are able to see themselves as factors in the process, able in a measure to guide it. Men now may modify their environment. change their culture,

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with a deliberate purpose "The Man that is to be comes at the call of the Man that is" Conscious Evolution becomes the principle of our action.

If the mind in a quiet hour would attain a conspectus of things, let it detach itself in imagination from all that is familiar Let it withdraw from this room, this town, these fields, withdraw from people, institutions, language, all customary thoughts Let the soul dare to rise from the earth itself, take station out in space, and see this globe as it rolls slowly round the sun.

Then the imagination may look back through the aeons, and watch the planet—molten, cooling, consolidating, the continents and oceans taking shape, living creatures evolving, man emerging It may scan the course of his history—speech developing, tribes and nations forming, with laws and customs, religions, and policies It may see the stumbling progress of mankind, their successes and their failures, and the reasons for them

Let the mind's eye survey the two thousand millions of human beings who now occupy the earth, heirs of all that has gone before, progenitors of all that is to come after View them in their homes, their villages, towns and States, with their beliefs and disbeliefs, their devotions to creeds and causes, nationalities and races See their conflicts between classes and between nations, their warships and fighting planes, their waiting armies. Then as the globe turns, see how the dawn brings out of darkness, all down the curve of the earth, the domes and spires, towers and minarets of thousands of cathedrals, churches, synagogues, mosques and temples They are significant They are the signs of man's

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perennial striving to transcend his planet, to reach out towards the Spirit that pervades this space, understands these constellations and distant galaxies, and these vibrations quivering everywhere

Only for a moment can the soul endure the cold and silence of that isolation. It will hurry back to familiar things, to the comfort of the nature that we know and the warmth of human society. But perhaps, if we have once felt that detachment, the problems that surround us—personal, social, international, religious; problems which all seem so momentous and so complex—may afterwards appear in a different light, and simpler.



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## To Have the Honour

(continued)

priest of Jupiter in Rome, had to observe an extraordinarily large number of taboo rules. He was not allowed to ride, to see a horse or an armed man, to wear a ring that was not broken, to have a knot in his garments, to touch wheat flour or leaven, or even to mention by name a goat, a dog, raw meat, beans and ivy, his hair could only be cut by a free man and with a bronze knife, his hair combings and nail parings had to be buried under a lucky tree, he could not touch the dead, go into the open with bare head, and similar prohibitions. His wife, the Flaminica, also had her own prohibitions: she was not allowed to ascend more than three steps on a certain kind of stairs, and on certain holidays she could not comb her hair, the leather for her shoes could not be taken from any animal that had died a natural death, but only from one that had been slaughtered or sacrificed, when she heard thunder she was unclean until she had made an expiatory sacrifice.

The old kings of Ireland were subject to a series of very curious restrictions, the observance of which was expected to bring every blessing to the country while their violation entailed every form of evil. The complete description of these taboos is given in the *Book of Rights*, of which the oldest manuscript copies bear the dates 1390 and 1418. The prohibitions are very detailed and concern certain activities at specified places and times, in some cities, for instance, the king cannot stay on a certain day of the week, while at some specified hour this or that river may not be crossed, or again there is a plain on which he cannot camp a full nine days, etc.

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## To Have the Honour

(continued)

Among many savage races the severity of the taboo restrictions for the priest-kings has had results of historic importance which are especially interesting. The honour of being a priest-king proved to be desirable, the person in line for the succession often used every means to escape it. Thus in Cambodia, where there is a fire and water king, it is often necessary to use force to compel the successor to accept the honour. On Niue or Savage Island, a coral island in the Pacific Ocean, monarchy actually came to an end because nobody was willing to undertake the responsible and dangerous office. In some parts of West Africa a general council is held after the death of the king to determine upon the successor. The man on whom the choice falls is seized, tied and kept in custody in the fetish house until he has declared himself willing to accept the crown. Sometimes the presumptive successor to the throne finds ways and means to avoid the intended honour, thus it is related of a certain chief that he used to go armed day and night and resist by force every attempt to place him on the throne. Among the negroes of Sierra Leone the resistance against accepting the kingly honour was so great that most of the tribes were compelled to make strangers their kings.

Frazer makes these conditions responsible for the fact that in the development of history a separation of the original priest-kingship into a spiritual and a secular power finally took place. Kings, crushed by the burden of their holiness, became incapable of exercising their power over real things and had to leave this to inferior but executive persons who were willing to renounce the honours of royal dignity.

(Extract from Totem and Taboo, by Sigmund Freud, one of the Pelican volumes)

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